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Unique happiness and path: a village adoption project in Yunnan, China

Deloitte 德勤
Office of Service-Learning, Lingnan University

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Unique Happiness and Path: A Village Adoption Project in Yunnan, China
This book shares and celebrates the happiness and valuable experiences that the volunteers of the Village Adoption Project in Yunnan have gained in the three years of the Project.

The Office of Service-Learning of Lingnan University of Hong Kong jointly launched with Deloitte China the three-year Village Adoption Project 2007-2010 in Yunnan. It is a pilot project that aims to develop a sustainable development model for rural communities in China through a combination of academic research, corporate social responsibility, and volunteering for a tenor long enough to implement real change. Besides this goal, the project also aims to encourage a culture and spirit of “Serving to Learn and Learning to Serve” amongst all the participants.

In 2007, the first batch of Deloitte staff and Lingnan students flew from Hong Kong to Kunming. It takes more than six hours to get from Kunming airport to Gezhangla Village, as the village is located on a mountain over 3,000 meters above sea level. Villagers have to walk at least one hour to reach the nearest town. The weather is very dry and drought is something the villagers have to face frequently. When the weather is fine, the village is very sandy but when it rains, it is covered in mud. In the course of the three years that followed, our volunteer teams have worked in sometimes very dry and sometimes very wet conditions. We have come to feel anticipation (almost like coming home) when the terraced fields and tiled roofs of Gezhangla come into view. Every time, we are greeted by the friendly smiling faces of the villagers.
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Lingnan University, as the only liberal arts university in Hong Kong, aims to explore students’ potentials, to encourage them to apply their professional expertise, and to nurture them as the future leaders for the community. Service-Learning plays an important role in students’ self-development. With the education reform in Hong Kong, the Office of Service-Learning (OSL) of Lingnan University has become a pioneer and promoter in breaking up the traditional teaching methodology, introducing into Hong Kong the unique extracurricular learning experience. It focuses on the integration of the curriculum learning and voluntary service, encourages the students to develop their leadership potentials during such learning, servicing, retrospection, and sharing, helps them to understand their individual uniqueness and their own development direction and ideals.

In addition, OSL also provides a platform for social resources allocation and cross-sector collaboration. It gives the students different opportunities for them to apply and consolidate their knowledge and join in community service during their college life, nurturing them to expand their vision, liberate their ideas, engage the world, and care for the development of the whole society.

The Village Adoption Project in Yunnan is a very good example of such Service-Learning. It is the first public/private sector collaboration involving a Hong Kong academic institution and a commercial enterprise. In this project, volunteers from Lingnan University and Deloitte China employees work together and with the Village community on a cohesive programme to develop the village in the face of pressures on its sustainability from rapid urbanisation and migration. Lingnan University students are encouraged to apply their curriculum knowledge to real life, realising the concept of “Learning By Doing”. This is a unique and rewarding experience for the students, enriching their knowledge and skills, and helping them to think about their own development and how they can better serve the community.

The stories shared by our volunteers in this book are testimony of the life-changing lessons they have learned, to which the cross-cultural, cross-regional, cross-sector, and cross-age friendship and teamwork spirit between Deloitte China employees and Lingnan students have contributed.
In 2007, Deloitte China entered into a Joint Agreement with Lingnan University to launch a 3-year Village Adoption Project in Yunnan to assist the sustainable development of a whole village community in Yunnan, China.

At Deloitte, we aspire to add value by thinking and acting with an Always One Step Ahead mentality for our clients, our people and, not least, our community. As far as we could see, the three-year Village Adoption Project in Yunnan was the first public-private sector collaboration involving a Hong Kong academic institution (Lingnan University), a Mainland academic institution (Yunnan Nationalities University), and a commercial enterprise (Deloitte China) for a tenure as long as three years and with such a comprehensive approach to assisting the sustainable development of a whole village community and fulfilling corporate social responsibility.

When the idea of the project was first presented to us, we welcomed it for the opportunity it would give Deloitte China to give all our employees, wherever in China they were based, to meet, pool their professional experience, and work together for the good of the community. As we expected, Deloitte China colleagues responded to it with great enthusiasm, to the extent that we still have a queue of volunteers.

Time flies and the project has now completed its 3 year term during which over 50 Deloitte employees and 50 Lingnan students have made trips to the village to do research on and implement projects to promote healthcare, education and micro-economic developments. These participants come from different backgrounds and cultures, but bonded as a team with a shared passion to serve the community and common goals for the adopted village. I believe their experiences and achievements will be an unforgettable page in their lives.

This book is dedicated to the widespread generosity we encountered from employees all across Deloitte China and from students of Lingnan University. In addition to volunteers for the field trips, many more also contributed in many other ways. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to everyone who participated in some way.
About Unique Happiness and Path

Since its establishment, the Office of Service-Learning (OSL) has been devoted to providing a variety of Service-Learning programmes to Lingnan University. The business-school collaboration model in the Village Adoption Project in Yunnan is a brand-new case, which further breaks through the restraints of Service-Learning and involves Lingnan University, Deloitte China, Hong Kong Christian Council, Yunnan Nationalities University, Yunnan Normal University, health center, education bureau, cultural affairs bureau, and the government of Gaoqiao Village. The cross-sector collaboration has enabled the successful implementation and development of the project.

The cross-sector nature makes the project even more "unique". Project participants come from different nationalities, cities, schools, and departments, and in the course of the journey they experienced different educational backgrounds and different service models. By meeting people of different sectors, understanding different professions, and recognising different cultures, they walked hand in hand with the villagers in developing the “path” (future) of Gezhangla Village, while helping them to improve village conditions.

During our contact with the villagers, we were not simply service providers, nor were they the so-called social vulnerable group. Instead, the unsophisticated villagers became our life coaches. By learning, experiencing, feeling, contributing, and sharing, we discovered their life, experience, enthusiasm and smile, all of which have taught us a special kind of happiness that is different from that in the city.

The unique happiness and path have made the Village Adoption Project in Yunnan a meaningful experience in the life of each participant. And it is for this reason that we have compiled this book: to touch the lives of more people and to encourage more people to find the meaning of their life by helping others.
Unique Happiness and Path: A Village Adoption Project in Yunnan, China

Service-Learning is different from ordinary volunteer service in that Service-Learning requires participants to have a basic understanding of the mission, structure, and operation of the programme and to actively participate, collaborate and make plans together with different entities to serve society, applying their professional expertise in the process, so as to make critical analyses and self-reflection.

And in the cross-sector collaborative Village Adoption Project in Yunnan, we require Lingnan students and Deloitte China employees to plan, prepare, and act together and reflect upon the process of the project and the bits and pieces in life. The project has integrated the curricular knowledge of Lingnan students with the professional expertise of Deloitte China employees. Furthermore, it breaks their existing mentality and encourages them to re-examine their knowledge and reality.

In terms of village development, what we did was more than simply offer services; instead, we focused on communicating with villagers and learning about their needs. To this end, we carried out several needs assessments and learned the true needs of the villagers through field investigation, family visit, survey, and meetings with the village head and government leaders.

Even more special is that it is a Service-Learning programme lasting three years, enabling the participants to take part in the continuing service and learning and to learn from different aspects the culture, education, healthcare and economic conditions of rural communities and minority nationalities in China.
Introduction of the Village Adoption Project in Yunnan

Organisers
About Lingnan University
Lingnan University is located in Tuen Mun, Hong Kong. The mission of Lingnan University, whose motto is ‘Education for Service’, lies in Liberal Arts Education. The university endeavours to provide students with an excellent education that amalgamates the liberal arts traditions of the east and west. With a strong emphasis on personal development, students are trained to think independently, exercise judgment, care for others and readily take on responsibilities in the ever-changing environments in Hong Kong, the Asian region and the rest of the world.

As a student-oriented liberal arts institution, Lingnan University focuses on the relationship between the teaching staff and students, where instructors and their charges interact with and learn from one another. To this end, the university’s student population has always been maintained at around 2,300 to facilitate smaller classes. This has also allowed 75% of the student body to experience hostel life in the campus. Community service is an indispensable aspect of campus life in Lingnan University. The university provides students with many opportunities to engage in various kinds of community service. It even set up the Office of Service-Learning to co-ordinate service-learning courses – the first of its kind in Hong Kong.

About Office of Service-Learning, Lingnan University
The Office of Service-Learning (OSL) was set up in 2006. It offers learning opportunities for students through service provision, whereby students, under the guidance of course instructors and service agencies, can develop positive attitudes and concrete skills, and integrate their knowledge through participation in service-learning programs. The service-learning components have been implanted across the curriculum since 2004-05. OSL seeks to provide a vital University-community link so that students can find fulfillment in academic pursuit and serving those in need. The followings are the missions:

• To promote Lingnan University’s motto “Education for Service”
• To provide reciprocal benefits to the participants and the community
• To produce a positive developmental impact on student learning and growth
• To enhance learning and teaching efficacy through Service-Learning

The Start of Project
In 2007, with the Support of Deloitte China and Lingnan University, Deloitte China entered into a Joint Agreement with Office of Service-Learning to launch a 3-year Village Adoption Project in Yunnan to assist the sustainable development of a whole village community in Yunnan, China, through academic research, corporate social responsibility and volunteer service. The project aims to promote the vision of “Serving to Learn, Learning to Serve” amongst the participants.

Particular focus for each year of the project
The first year focused on education, the second on preventive healthcare, and the third on micro-economic options to sustain the village’s livelihood in the future. In the course of the three years, twelve joint delegations of Lingnan University students and Deloitte China employees visited Gezhangla village.

Project timeline

2006

December
First site visit to Gezhangla village by Steering Committee members of the project.
January
Official “Memorandum of Understanding” Signing Ceremony of the Village Adoption Project in Yunnan at Lingnan University (Right: Prof. Edward Chen, ex-President of Lingnan University; Left: Mr. Kester Yuen, Southern China Regional Managing Partner, Deloitte China.)

August
First visit by Deloitte employees and Lingnan University students.

2008

March
Opening of “Deloitte Home”

December
The inspection group visited Gezhangla Village to check the dormitory project status and the water source of the village.

2009

June
Installation of water heaters.

August
Summer English Teaching Programme for senior secondary students in Wuding.
Unique Happiness: Life Stories in Gezhangla Village
Silent Dedication

CHIN Chun-ni
Student of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Lingnan University;
Graduate Trainee at the OSL

Working quietly
In the farmland of Gezhangla Village, we saw them working and stooping down; in the mountain paths, we saw them herding cows and sheep; in the school kitchen, we saw them cooking in front of the hearth. Every time we saw them, they were busy with something.

I still remember, once when we asked those aunts whether they would be free, they replied with a smile: “We are only free at night.” We were confused at the time. What were they busy with? Did it take them one whole day to finish work on the farmland? Later we went to the farmland and, facing the vast area of the farmland, looking at my own tiny hands, I felt it an impossible mission to collect the crops. But all these women just smiled, stooped down, and worked quietly at the crops.

Happy if her family is happy
During our years in Gezhangla Village, we gradually learned about the life of these women: before dawn every day, they get up, either to work in the farmland or to chop wood in the mountain; at noon, they hurry home to cook for the family; after lunch, they feed the chickens and then work on the farmland or in the mountain; at sunset, they shepherd the cows and sheep while carrying bamboo baskets filled with crops or wood on their backs. Seen from the back, the bamboo basket is so large that it almost blocks out an entire person. Watching from afar, you can see the “bamboo baskets” walking, one after another, on the zigzagging and rugged mountain roads. After returning home, the women prepare supper for the family. And it is not until after 7 pm that they finish all this work. Such life goes on, day after day. Whether it be farm work or housework, these women shoulder it quietly, without complaint.

When we asked them whether they were happy with their lives, they would reply “Yes. My husband is kind to me and my kids are good.” They are happy so long as their families are happy.

Afraid to be a burden
However, we began to worry about them. Perhaps for fear of worrying their families, or maybe because of the idea in the countryside that men are superior to women, they just kept their own pain and troubles to themselves. When asked about women’s health problems, they were reluctant to say anything. It was due to our continuous encouragement that they began to reveal their own concerns and anxieties and that their poignant stories began to pour out.

They said that there was once a woman in the village who must have got some breast disease but was afraid to tell others. Nor did the woman see a doctor, thinking that it was an “indecent” disease. Her illness became more and more severe, and her breasts began to ulcerate and even had worms growing in them. She died in the end. Besides feeling heartbroken for the deceased, the other women in the village also began to worry about themselves, but no one dared to ask a question; nor did they know who to ask about the disease. Furthermore, because of the birth control policy, most of the women in the village who had given birth were forced to have ligations or intra-uterine operations, without knowing that these operations would have side effects and sometimes without even knowing where the uterus is located.

Learning about self-help
Listening to their questions and worries, we decided to provide as much information as they needed to help them understand their own bodies. So every time we visited the village, we would prepare classes and booklets for women’s health education. I still remember the first time when we taught them how to check their own breasts; they were very embarrassed and yet very happy. Today, a group of women have already become the health ambassadors in the village, helping us pass on health information to more women. For their help, we are sincerely thankful.

In these women of Gezhangla Village, we have seen the fortitude and unselfishness of human beings; their optimism and passion have taught us that happiness can be very simple and that it comes from perseverance through pain and suffering. They were not rich, but every time we met them, they would give us their hand-made knapsacks, insoles, and pillowcases; each piece of needlework embodied their passion and culture. Their quiet devotion and contribution to the village, their family and to the passing on of the traditional handicrafts of the Yi nationality deserve our utmost respect.

The concept that man is superior to woman has already been deeply rooted in the countryside, and it will take time to improve and elevate the position of women. Today, we simply hope that these women will laugh and live more happily and healthfully and appreciate themselves more.

Question for you:
If you were one of them, would you be as tenacious and persevering as they are?
Alone except for the company of her craft
During our visit to Gezhangla Village on 30 December, we met an elderly woman who was doing embroidery. And she told us her story of embroidery.

The woman was of the Yi ethnicity, which was apparent from her Yi-style clothes: a black shirt and black trousers with blue lace borders, all embroidered with pretty patterns such as flowers, grass, flying birds and phoenixes. Even more beautiful was the black cloth hat with a golden embroidery of flowers. The woman said that her costume and all the patterns on it were made by her.

In her sixties, she was now living alone. Her daughter married outside the village and her son was working in a city far away.

Learning the craft of embroidery from past generations
She arrived at the village from a neighboring village forty years ago when she married a genuine, hardworking, quiet and strong young man. Back then, her parents-in-law were still alive and she was an attractive young woman, with a pair of shining eyes under her slender eyebrows, long eyelashes, a rosy complexion, a pair of smiling dimples, and a thick and long braid down her back. That year, she was only 18 years old. When she married, she was only able to do some farm work and basic housework; with a poor family background, she hardly knew any needlework and was considered incompetent for a rural girl. However, she was hardworking and persevering, so after all the other work was done, her mother-in-law would teach her to weave, make clothes, and embroider. It wasn’t long before she had learned these new skills. During her breaks from farm work and after returning home, she would practice embroidery, sometimes until dawn. And her husband would sit beside her until deep into the night, keeping the stove fire alive in the winter nights and driving mosquitoes away for her in the summer nights. They loved and took good care of each other. Although they were not rich, they lived happily.

The toll of searching for a livelihood
Then misfortune arrived. When their first daughter was 10 years old, there was a drought - not a single drop of rain for over 4 months - and almost all the crops died. To survive, her husband had to leave his family and find a job outside the village. Before his departure, the woman prepared food and clothes for her husband and put on a floral waist belt for him that she had made during that very night, which had a pair of mandarin ducks on it. Ever since their marriage, the couple had never separated. Not knowing when her husband would return and thinking that they would be away from each other for quite a long time, the woman was sorrowful. Seeing the husband off for over ten miles, the woman was finally persuaded by her husband and his companions to go back. As she watched her husband’s silhouette gradually disappear, tears welled up in her eyes.

Question for you:
Have you taken the time to appreciate and learn from the experiences of the older generation?

HU Xiao-dong
Student of Biology, School of Life Sciences, Yunnan Normal University

Embroidery with Love
Time passed, one day after another, and her longing for her husband grew. One day, two days... one month, two months... Finally her husband returned home. But to her great sorrow, her husband was very fatigued and haggard, his withered skin like a ragged coat which was loose and large on his body. She remembered clearly that on the day he returned home, he kept picking out from his pockets the silk threads that he had brought for his wife. The husband became sick and despite painstaking care from his wife, he died very soon, because they had no money to see a doctor or to buy medicine. The woman cried her heart out, but she had to be strong, because life had to go on and she had to take care of their children. Every day, rain or shine, she spent long hours working in the farmland, and at night, she took out those threads that she deemed so precious and embroidered the patterns that were once the favourites of her late husband. She burst out in tears when she was embroidering, as it reminded her of her late husband and of the nights that he used to sit by her.

**Passing on the legacy of Yi embroidery**

During the course of time, embroidery has become a steady habit of the woman. She hasn’t used up the silk threads that her husband bought for her, and she still works late through the night until dawn. Her embroidery becomes more and more beautiful every year, and more and more people are learning embroidery from her. She shows them every step of the embroidery and tells them the story of her and her late husband. And at that time, her sunken eyes always become filled with tears of happiness.

The woman is embroidering, she is missing her husband, and she is also inheriting and passing on the embroidery culture of Yi ethnicity.
I have always felt that a life of traveling and stopping occasionally is more enriching than a life with hasty running and rushing, because stopping to reflect and contemplate enables us to think more clearly about the course of life. So I spent four days in the terraces of Gezhangla Village, looking at the mountains, listening to the organised and crisp singing of the lovely children at Gezhangla Primary School nearby, and contemplating the new connection that I was forming with this community.

I come from Guangdong Province and am now studying at Lingnan University of Hong Kong for four years. On hearing that our OSL had a collaborative project with Deloitte China to serve for a rural community in Yunnan, I immediately enrolled in the project, as I was deeply convinced that the collaboration between such two influential groups would definitely endow this three-year project with profound meaning. And how could I miss this? Passing the interviews, I headed for Yunnan with other team members during the winter vacation at the end of 2009, to a village that I had never visited, to meet people that I had never met before, and to provide services that I have never before provided.

We arrived at Wuding County, Kunming City of Yunnan Province. Setting foot once again on the Mainland, I felt familiar and at ease. The not-so-organised streets echo the frequent hawking sounds; and people are strolling casually, even though they might be worrying about the tuition of the following year for their children, or about the health of their aged spouses. There is a special tranquility. Trust me, whatever pressure you are under, you feel more relaxed and learn to “take a break” from what you come to realise are, in many cases, self imposed pressures.

At Gezhangla Village, we used reading, singing and dance to teach our young friends; we visited the enthusiastic villagers to learn about their living conditions; and we spent a busy and lively New Year’s Day with the villagers. Every day in the mountain, I tried to breathe the fresh air with the smell of mud, to feel the pure and simple humanity and culture, and to remember the pairs of glistening eyes that yearn for knowledge. Surrounded by these people with their simple lives lived so close to nature, I felt clearly and deeply my own existence. As difficult as the living conditions may have been and as slightly chilly as the weather was, I would say it was the happiest days of my life.

I still remember that at some moments, I almost burst into tears. The first time was when I gathered my little friends and took their small hands to hear them sing “Counting the ducks” and “Going for an outing”, and felt that their hands were coarse from work. I felt so sorry for them. The second time was when Nanny Yang, with her little boy asleep on her back and tears in her eyes, took my hand tightly into hers and told me about the low income and poor health conditions of her family that year. The third time was at the New Year Evening Party. When people were dancing around the bonfires, I asked the little girl beside me:

“Do you love school?”

“Yes, I do!”

“And how long do you want to study?”

“When I finish primary school, I’ll go to middle school. Then I’ll go to high middle school and university.”

“Do you think you can finish them all?”

“I don’t know. My father says that if I can’t go to school, I’ll go back home and work in the field. But I don’t want to work in the field. I want to go to school!”

Even if she makes good grades, she might have to quit school because of poverty but she is young enough to have pure and simple hope, and I hope that she never loses this. I also sincerely pray for the rains to fall and that her soul will never be broken by the cruelty of reality.

I regard this trip as a short pause after a long time of busy work and study in Hong Kong. Now it is the time to stop and to think: what am I pursuing? Is it worth the pain and struggle? And what kind of life do I truly want?
In the metropolitan city of Hong Kong, all things are so attractive that they inspire endless desire in people and make them constantly run and hurry forward, for fear of being left behind. In such a social environment where economic interest comes first, however unselfish a person may be, he will become materialistic. I have always felt that I live in the silt but have not been contaminated. The fact is, however, I am now on my way to losing myself. How pitiful!

How can one realise self-value? On the quiet nights in Gezhangla Village, I savoured my interactions with children and communication with the villagers. I suddenly realised that I had a sense of accomplishment that came from the joy and vigor, however limited, that I had brought to the small village. My sweat was not shed in vain. And doesn’t the realisation of self-value lie in impacting and influencing a life with your own life? By making your own contribution, however tiny and subtle, you can see the splendid and radiant flowers that blossom when the contribution is magnified, from the group that has been helped. Rather than ignorantly being engulfed by some unexplained ambitions at an unknown time, wouldn’t it be better to spare some time and energy to serve society and extend a helping hand to those who need the help? This way, our value will never be ignored and neglected by society and by the self.

I will keep in mind what I have been thinking, because those memories are so unforgettable. Even today, the singing of those children still echoes in my mind. If possible, I will visit the village again, to see the mountains, the cows, the children, and the changes that are taking place in the rural area of China. More importantly, I am looking forward to sweating again on this land, to serving this group of lovely people, and to experiencing again another kind of meaning of life, one which depends on to what extent degree I have impacted the lives of those who need help. Holding my breath, wholeheartedly, I pray for life, for Gezhangla Village.
To be able to participate in the Village Adoption Project in Yunnan was the happiest thing for me in 2008. After all, it was really not a good year for me.

Having just recovered from one shock in 2008, I was about to organise my luggage and the packages in my soul, when an even bigger shock struck me, one that I had never experienced before and was branded in me and made me want to pass out. It was a Thursday morning without classes when I received the news. That day I learned the meaning of real anguish and grief in life and I cried for three hours. But deep in my heart, I knew that no matter how bitterly I cried, it wouldn’t change the fact that my grandpa was gone.

It was the first funeral affair that we had had in the family and the first time that I was so close to death. And it was my dearest grandpa, with whom I had spent my childhood. Today, I cannot recall how I survived the days after I learned that my grandpa was gone. I just remember that wherever I went, I would suddenly think of the fact that my grandpa had passed away and I couldn’t help but blame myself: why didn’t I make it to hospital to see him for the last time? Then memories gushed into my mind, as if to suffocate me. Those days were hard. On 17 November, the 11th day after grandpa was gone, I attended, for the first time, a planning meeting of the Village Adoption Project in Yunnan.

One year ago, when I was in the first semester as a sophomore, I learned about Service-Learning. That year, I served for Fu Tai Neighborhood Elderly Centre for about four months, learning how to communicate and get along with the elderly. Back then, I was thinking of joining the Yunnan trip in the remaining three years at university, because in my mind, this project would best reflect what Service-Learning is. And I had my wish fulfilled. I was selected as one of the 27 participants in the third group to visit the village.

Although it was the social service that I had been longing for, at that time, I was only doing it as a responsibility. Frankly, I felt as if a rock was on my mind, making me feel not as if I was in pain, but breathless. At the meeting, I was absent-minded, my mind occupied with my late grandpa and the trauma in my soul; during the flight, I was restless, unable to stop thinking about those warm but biting memories; and in Yunnan, I wasn’t feeling any better. The only exception was the first night, when I brushed my teeth; a chilly wind brought me back to myself; for the rest of the time, I was like a wandering soul.

Until our visits really began.

In the mornings at Gezhangla Village, I set my sorrow aside and started the day’s visit. Our task for this trip was to teach some women’s health education classes and visit each household to ask about the habits, health record, and other family background of the villagers. Every day, I would carry a pen, a pile of questionnaires, a camera and thoughts of my late grandpa around the mountain, asking the villagers how many times per week they would have meat and whether they were suffering from any diseases. Oftentimes, looking at the grandpas of other families, I couldn’t help but think of my own grandpa: where was he and how was he doing now? My longing for my late grandpa was like the mountains of Gezhangla Village, which seemed to extend endlessly; the high and open heavens above sometimes brought me out of my grief, making me marvel at the beauty of the nature, and sometimes left me with confusion, wondering why I was feeling so pained — wasn’t I only a tiny little grain of sand in these huge mountains? Then I felt somewhat soothed.
Along the layers of croplands, we walked to the homes of the villagers at the foot of the mountain. The scenery was so beautiful that I kept using my camera until I arrived at a family of three. I still remember that the head of the family I visited told me that he had been in poor health since he felt off of a high building several years ago. I continued with my questionnaire: “Do you feel satisfied with your life?” “Do you feel empty in the depth of your heart?” He smiled and answered: “No, not at all. I’m a very simple person. I don’t like thinking too much. This way, I can be happy all the time!” Pressing this chest (he was hurt in the sternum in the fall), he continued: “It is the case with us farmers. We don’t have much money to see a doctor with when we are sick or wounded. But things will get better with time. There will be no problem!” In his simple and crude kitchen, the vegetables that he grew by himself were cooked. And he told me that only when they celebrate major festivals would they have some pork. Despite such desolate living, he was smiling and saying that he felt happy and satisfied, while at the same time he was massaging the hurting wound. He was truly the happiest villager that I had met during these days. And his smiling face, with several teeth missing, still remains clear in my memory. It was not the sight of my late grandpa in the dream or the departure of the suffocating 2008 that made me feel like smiling; but it was this uncle who had lost several teeth. His passion for and satisfaction with life deeply touched me. Having only vegetables for food, with a body tortured by disease, he was still facing life with a smile. I felt somewhat ashamed of myself.

So, on that night, I smiled. Standing on the playground of Gezhangla Primary School with my classmates, waiting for the appearance of the meteor, at the moment when it swept across the sky, I said to myself: “Grandpa, I miss you. But I’ll go on with my life.” In Gezhangla Village, I left my sorrow and mourning for the deceased behind and packed my everlasting yearning for my grandpa and passion for life and brought them back home. The year 2008 is gone; and a new year begins with this smile with missing teeth. I am wondering, how is the uncle doing?
Unique Path: Common Goal in Diversified Team
Common goal of the diversified team
Each delegation is comprised of participants from different places and with different strengths: We have Deloitte China employees from different professional disciplines and offices across the firm’s network of 14 offices, Lingnan students from different academic disciplines, students from different universities in Yunnan, and even some Hong Kong student volunteers studying in Britain. While our backgrounds and personal goals may differ, we all share a common goal which is to help Gezhangla Village.
With the help of Hong Kong Christian Council and the university, I joined the Village Adoption Project in Yunnan jointly launched by Lingnan University and Deloitte China. The target village of this project is my hometown. I feel very happy with such a big group of people coming to help my village.

The activity has many participants with different backgrounds. I can communicate with them closely to learn from their manners and etiquette, their ways of doing things and their attitudes, their perspectives on rural development, their new concepts, ideas and thoughts... As this is the first time that I have ever participated in such an activity, it is a test for me, which I believe will teach me the truth of life.

Born in the countryside, I know quite intimately the hardships that come with living in the countryside. Previously, I was only looking at this place where I grew up, with my eyes. This time, as I return to it, I’ll learn to look at it and feel it with my heart and think about how to unshackle the village from poverty.

This project aims to preserve the cultural characteristics of the minority nationalities and increase the family income of the villagers through the handcrafts made by the villagers. During the trip, we discussed the Yi nationality handcrafts plan. Many team members expressed their opinions such as how to help the villagers sell their handcrafts and how to achieve sustainable development... Deloitte employees and Lingnan students, such as Yeung To, introduced many good ideas and suggestions. And during the discussion, several students from the countryside, including me, also shared with the team our experience of living in the countryside. The active explorations and heated discussions at the meeting taught me an impressive lesson.

After arriving at Gezhangla Village, we lived with the children, teachers, and villagers there. We conducted surveys, waste management education and promotion, women’s health education and promotion, and children’s interactive English teaching. Coming from the countryside myself, I know that this is a great and priceless experience for the villagers, because they can learn some common sanitation knowledge, learn more about the concept of environmental protection, learn English, talk about life with the volunteers and practice Mandarin Chinese. Deloitte China and Lingnan University also built a dormitory building for the Gezhangla Primary School. The village is in great need of this building, because without it the children have to walk a long way to school. With the conditions of the village improved, and with such visits and communication, the children can study and grow better.

The 8-day Village Adoption Project trip in Yunnan has ended, but everything remains in my memory. During the trip, I faced some obstacles and, more importantly, learned a lot. I still remember that before participating in this activity, I was introverted and uneasy and shy with strangers. But after spending some time with them, I was no longer like I was before: I even played the Killer game with them and gave a magic performance on New Year’s Day. It was their encouragement and inspiration that gave me courage, cementing my commitment to serve my hometown and the countryside.

The different activities also taught me what a team should be like. Our team members trust each other and would change themselves to adapt to the team, rather than ask the team to adapt to them. We won’t try to change others’ weakness, but we bring into full play our own strengths. Through teamwork, everybody realises his/her own role and knows that he/she is unique and important. Besides, we have reached the common understanding that everyone should care about others more than about themselves. So, each of us has tried his/her best. I still remember Ah-tang from our team. However tired she was, she would go to the children, play with them and make them happy. And Uncle, who was the oldest person in the team, makes me feel that he is the most youthful and energetic: on the mountain road, he would help other team members; returning to the school, he would play actively with the children; every morning, he is the first to get up. He was always full of energy and strength.

More importantly, I have learned that to help others is a difficult and happy thing. Only by applying what we have learned at school to life can we grow better. I believe that each of us is accepting pain and separation while enjoying a beautiful life, pursuing our dream in the face of difficulties, and making our dream and belief come true step by step!
Love is in everybody. Like the limpid brook, it nourishes our body and heart. To warm the people around with a kind heart, to help the students as a friend, I have learned the ways of love during this giving and thanksgiving. With love, I can make things possible.

Children from underdeveloped areas, including me, usually lack self-confidence. I am very sure about this. So, before I could help the students in the village, I had to first become more self-confident. This was not as easy as I had imagined.

I can never forget the first time I stood on the platform. Looking at those eyes that were filled with a thirst for knowledge, a passion surged through me. I wanted to share all of my knowledge with them. However, as a first-time teacher, seeing for the first time so many tall students sitting before me, I was so excited and nervous that all my previous preparation in the past few days didn’t help and I failed to clearly express myself. I felt ashamed. But when I walked out of the classroom, Dr. Ma took my hands, gave me encouragement and support, helped me to regain self-confidence and courage, and more importantly, made me realize the true meaning of the sentence - “NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE”.

The faith and strength of one person is subtle; but the common faith and mutual support of a group can be powerful. Together with those from Lingnan University of Hong Kong and Deloitte China who are growing up with me, being touched by the same experiences as me. It is for this reason that I feel happy and satisfied. The trip to the village has let me know that there are people more unfortunate than me, who are living and studying in a poorer environment. Once again, therefore, I told myself, I must work harder, do more meaningful things, and be brave in the face of any setbacks and difficulties, because I know I can make things possible. I have added, for myself, that comma, because I carry with me those students that I’m eager to help, who have in turn given me the power to go on. It is because of your love and encouragement that I have made this step bravely. Here, I would like to say: thank you!

Looking back at the beginning of the program when I felt nervous speaking and comparing it to the end, when at the large experience sharing evening party, I could easily and confidently share my past experience, I realise that the process of giving is also one of learning and growing. And amidst the grateful and happy tears of the students, I have felt the happiness and joy of giving. From impossible to possible, it only takes a transition, like a comma. But this comma may take many many difficulties, struggle and the help from others. Yet, the only one who can add this comma is yourself, because you must believe: “I can make things possible!”

I come from a poor family. But I have had the help and support of my teachers and kind-hearted Xinhuo volunteers. Now there are the friends from Lingnan University and Deloitte China who are growing up with me, being touched by the same experiences as me. The trip to the village has let me know that there are people more unfortunate than me, who are living and studying in a poorer environment. Once again, therefore, I told myself, I must work harder, do more meaningful things, and be brave in the face of any setbacks and difficulties, because I know I can make things possible. I have added, for myself, that comma, because I carry with me those students that I’m eager to help, who have in turn given me the power to go on. It is because of your love and encouragement that I have made this step bravely. Here, I would like to say: thank you!

Question for you:
Everybody has the potential of making the impossible possible. What possibilities would you like to make reality for yourself and others? How soon can you start?
I’m a student from Kunming City, Yunnan Province. In 2008, I was fortunate to secure a place at Lingnan University of Hong Kong and became a Lingnan student. As a student from a remote southwestern city in Mainland China, I was deeply attracted by this metropolitan city of Hong Kong when I first arrived: It has things that my hometown doesn’t have, the skyscrapers, the complete public transit system, and all types of modernised facilities. In my eyes, it is far better than my hometown Kunming City, Yunnan Province and I gradually got used to and fell in love with my life in Hong Kong. After a complicated application and selection process, this winter vacation, I became a member of the Village Adoption Project in Yunnan jointly launched by the OSL of Lingnan University and Deloitte. So far, it is the most unforgettable, challenging, and meaningful activity that I have ever taken part in at Lingnan University. After going through a series of preparations and trainings, my fellow team members and I completed this Service-Learning programme successfully. There were both difficulties and joy during the process: I will never forget my clumsiness when I tried to make prize ribbons for the first time, the romantic night in Gezhangla Village when we were looking at the stars in the sky, the pure and simple joy, that had been long forgotten, when playing games with my little friends, and the joyful dancing at the bonfire evening party… and I will never forget any of my team members.

Writing this article, I have so much to say. Before, I used to be very aware that my hometown had an underdeveloped economy; so I worked and studied hard and realised my dream of leaving Yunnan when I finally came to study in Hong Kong. But after going through this programme, I realise that I never really knew real poverty and that my concept of poverty has changed thoroughly. I used to believe that poverty meant the lack of modern facilities, advanced city management system, luxuries, or famous brands. So I regarded Yunnan Province as poor. But when I arrived at Wuding County, or Gezhangla Village, I was shocked! With a distance of less than 100 km between my hometown and Gezhangla Village, there could be such huge differences!

Upon arrival at Wuding No. 1 Secondary School, I felt puzzled and surprised at the poor English competency of the senior students: they didn’t even know the most basic English expressions. I recall the time when I was studying in Grade 1 at a high school in Kunming, my classmates were already able to have fluent conversations in English. With such a contrast, I thought that it was because the students of Wuding No. 1 Secondary School didn’t work hard enough. Soon I realised that it was all caused by the uneven allocation of education resources. And these poor children have become the victims of such disparities.

Question for you:
Have you ever felt fortunate when having a clean classroom for lessons?
When I told them the name of my middle school - Middle School Affiliated with Yunnan Normal University, there were all shocked: in their opinion, this school is very exclusive and unreachable. Some of best teachers of the province came to my middle school from other schools, areas and regions in the province for a better salary. And accordingly, the students with the greatest grades in the college-entrance examinations in Yunnan every year are from my middle school. Knowing that it is a myth and legend in the eyes of these children, I felt somewhat sad, because very few people in Yunnan are enjoying the very limited, but top-level education resources. I used to be proud of my school, because in the whole Yunnan Province, most of the students with the highest scores are from it; and those Yunnan students who have come to study in Hong Kong are also basically from the same school. However, now I realise the price behind such outstanding achievement – the lack of education resources for the majority of children at the same age; as a result, many children have lost this competition in life from the very beginning. And I had never realised these problems before.

And my experience in the remote Gezhangla Village gave me a bigger shock. The most basic facilities that I had always taken for granted, such as water and power supply, roads, and education, were hardly in existence here. I realised that somewhere near the place where I was born is another world. Indeed, I had seen many similar poor areas on TV and newspapers, but it was only when I really lived there that I began to realise and understand very clearly that water doesn’t just come by turning on the tap, that cars are not running everywhere, that education is not a right for everybody. The poverty and backwardness of Yunnan was something that I had never experienced and suffered through before.

Because of these overwhelming shocks, I devoted myself to the whole Service-Learning programme with greater enthusiasm and passion. I tried my best to help those that I could help. Despite the knowledge that my own power is small and limited, I believe a single spark can start a prairie fire. Now I finally realise that my life today is so happy and beautiful. I am really thankful to my parents, to Lingnan University for giving me such a precious education opportunity, and to the OSL for giving me the chance to learn more about myself and my hometown.

In the future, I will continue to take part in similar activities to help my friends around me and every child growing up in the city reexamine his/her own life with a heart of gratitude and then help others.
I still remember, when I was a little girl, when I saw the children from poor areas and heard their sad stories on TV, I would feel sorry for them. But as I was too little then, I couldn’t do anything except ask my family to donate money to them.

At high school I worked as a part-time tutor for students of lower grades. The good feeling of superiority that came from teaching and sharing knowledge gave me the goal of becoming a teacher. Occasionally I thought, wouldn’t it be nice to teach in a rural area? Then I entered university and became a student in the Department of English Education. At that time, my goal of becoming a teacher was still noth much more than a dream.

It was in 2008 and 2009 when I took part in the Village Adoption Project in Yunnan and visited the rural area twice that I gradually got closer to my dream. During the first visit I was involved with the English teaching activity prepared by Wuding No. 1 Secondary School and Gezhangla Village. Though the stay was short, I realised the areas I could improve in and that would give me a better foundation for the subsequent Summer English Teaching programme.

During the Summer English Teaching programme for the Village Adoption Project in Yunnan, from the framework to practice, from my own concept to integration with those of my peers and the completion of the whole programme, it took far more time and effort than I had imagined. But it was also the next step that I had officially taken towards my dream. On the programme, I understood the hard work my teacher was referring to when he said, “for every piece of homework you do, I have to check over forty copies”.

However, most surprisingly, though I arrived at the village as a “teacher”, there I learned the most profound lesson of my life.

In contrast to the students in Hong Kong, Yunnan students are very eager to learn. They work really hard for an unknown future, from 7 in the morning to 11 at night, 6.5 days per week. For senior students of Grade 3, the half-day off every week is a huge luxury, during which they may take a bus ride of several hours to get home. They have become studying machines, without choice, because after going through so much hardship, now that they are in high school, they must go on in order to escape poverty. And this hardship and pressure are unimaginable to Hong Kong students. These Yunnan students feel sad, tired, and helpless, but they have nobody to turn to or to listen to them.

In Hong Kong, we emphasise methods, skills, and efficiency; but in Gezhangla Village it could be said that there are no methods, no skills, and no efficiency. When we study, we are thinking about how to get higher scores with less effort, while the students in Gezhangla Village are trying to do as much as possible to achieve a better score. Listening to the students telling their unique stories and background, I became more aware of the advantages and privileges that I have as well as my shortcomings; I was also ashamed because I didn’t know what qualifications I had to be their teacher. Each of these students became my teacher.

The tall and strong boys bowed to me when we were leaving the village; a girl that we had only had lunch with twice waited two hours for us just to say goodbye and to give me a letter; when I was sick, the students sent their good wishes to me in English in their homework … all these warm memories make me happy and sad. Besides checking their homework, preparing classes for them more carefully, and working with my team members to hold the discussion meetings, what else can I do to help them?

In Hong Kong, we emphasise methods, skills, and efficiency for every piece of homework you do, I have to check over forty copies”.

When the unfortunate stories on TV unfolded one by one before my eyes, I could only sigh at the tininess and humbleness of man before destiny and then put on a smile and find some reasons for them to hold on. However, I know that I can do more than just feel sorry for them and share my knowledge with them, once I return to Hong Kong. I will pass on these life stories to this happy land of Hong Kong and share them with each of my future students so that they will help improve others’ lives.

What is education? Education teaches people to be stronger and tougher; more importantly, it teaches people the meaning of influencing others’ lives with their own life.

**Question for you:**
What does education mean to you?
Pass it On

As a student, I was relying on the directions and assistance of the employee team members much of the time; but with the change in role, as an employee, I realised the importance of a sense of mission and of taking responsibility: besides assisting the students in the team so that they could apply their professional expertise to real-life situations, I had to finish the health survey for the villagers in Gezhangla Village and set up a reference database so that their health conditions might be improved. Only in my early twenties and with limited experience, this task was hard for me but it was a precious learning opportunity that helped me grow. What I learned is beneficial to me for my whole life. Learning involves challenges; I have never looked at it as a job but a life experience and a foundation for life-long learning. The success of the programme also depended on the support of my colleagues and partners when I stumbled. I feel proud of each of us.

Witnessing the healthy growth of the children of the village like new buds was the most touching thing in my trip. Perhaps each of us, insignificant and tiny in this world, cannot do much; but united, we can use our strength and power to help those around us. When that kid who took my hand, as mentioned earlier, once again took my hand, which I had always considered the most common and ordinary gesture, saying: “Big brother, play with us!”, love was there, floating in the air!

I have been thinking, it must have been the smell of the green grass in the field, the humanity and affection below the mud bricks, and the purest, truest, and simplest love in Gezhangla Village that made us stick to this programme, despite our changing roles and identities.

Two years passed. And I was able to return to Gezhangla as an employee, to contribute more to the happiness and progress of this village.

In December 2008, I became chief coordinator for health research in Gezhangla village; the complexity of the programme was something that I had never imagined or experienced when I was a student. Due to a lack of relevant research material, the programme was even harder; and due to the unique characteristics (geography, culture, and economic behaviour) of the region, even if we found the suitable tools, we had to make adjustments based on literature and field experience. This time, my experience of serving in Gezhangla Village helped. During my first visit as a student, I was relying on the directions and assistance of the employee team members much of the time; but with the change in role, as an employee, I realised the importance of a sense of mission and of taking responsibility: besides assisting the students in the team so that they could apply their professional expertise to real-life situations, I had to finish the health survey for the villagers in Gezhangla Village and set up a reference database so that their health conditions might be improved. Only in my early twenties and with limited experience, this task was hard for me but it was a precious learning opportunity that helped me grow.

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The city is advancing rapidly every day: buildings are being built higher and higher into the sky, while those precious affections are sinking lower and lower. Running busily after name and fame, floating amongst the virtual information, what, in the end, have we gained? We never stop to take a look at the sky above, to count the stars; however shiny and bright the faces around are, we never really pay attention and care!

I can hardly express what I have learned, felt and experienced in the village, even if I used hundreds of words. As college students, or as city dwellers, we should really try to put down our work sometimes and go to the rural areas in China and allow the culture and deep affections there to touch us. Bringing new knowledge to the villagers, and feeling and experiencing the people and things there with a sincere heart will leave a life-long memory in us!
As an employee of Deloitte China, I was also a “Lingnan student”: I studied in Lingnan (University) College in Guangzhou; after working for several years, I returned to Lingnan to study. So far, it’s been 15 years since I first joined Lingnan.

At the beginning of 2008, I was very excited when I learned about the Village Adoption Project in Yunnan, jointly launched by Deloitte and Lingnan University. If I could take part in the project to fulfill my social responsibility for the century-old brand of Deloitte as a Deloitte employee and promote the motto “Education for Service” of Lingnan University as a Lingnan graduate, what a precious experience it would be! I submitted my application letter, waited eagerly and was thrilled when my application was approved. And I finally got the chance to participate in the activities during the last year of this project.

During the one-week programme, I experienced longing, gathering, rapport, and separation.

Today, when I look back at what I have seen and experienced in the village, I can’t help but smile: the fresh excitement at the first gathering at Kunming airport, the sincerity and passion of each person at the self-introduction meeting of the team; the warmth and genuine feelings in the air when we had barbecues during the nights in Wuding County; the encouragement we gave each other when climbing the mountain in Gezhangla Village; the intimacy and sense of partnership we felt when having meals together in the school; the rapport and sense of accomplishment we felt when giving classes to the students and organising them to carry out all kinds of activities; the joy and excitement of dancing with the villagers around the bonfire on the New Year’s Eve and lighting fireworks to welcome the arrival of the new year. Most unforgettable of all, for a Lingnan person, was New Year’s Eve; after the villagers had gone back to their home, we started to sing the Lingnan School Song around the bonfire: “Broad the plain before us reaches, Calm the tides inflow; Far the mountains ever guard us, On in strength we go…”

The purity and joy of these local students and villagers in Yunnan had deeply touched me. However, they are still in great need of education, nutrition, medicare, health care, economic development, and environmental protection. Under the current social security system, most of these families could hardly survive any misfortune or disaster. Seeing the substantial changes that the Village Adoption Project in Yunnan brought to the local community, such as clean water supply, improved primary school conditions, more medical and health care knowledge, and the sharing of environmental protection concepts, I felt happy: as entities outside the village, enterprises, schools, and non-profit organisations can help and bring some changes. Deloitte China, as a company that places high importance on the fulfillment of corporate social responsibility, has made many investments and taken solid measures in China; seeing the photos that I shared with them of the visit in Yunnan, a client of Deloitte also decided to set up a fund and spend a part of their annual profits on social welfare. The world is small, like a family. When one member is suffering, the whole family provides support. It is high time that global citizens took action.

During my Yunnan trip, I spent every day with Lingnan students. They are friendly, enthusiastic, and caring, touching others. I have seen in them the Lingnan spirit that has been passed on for a long time, as well as very good personal qualities. Going from Hong Kong to a remote village in the Mainland, facing huge differences, different habits, culture, ethnicity, and language, these Lingnan students didn’t complain or withdraw. Instead, they faced these problems bravely, actively adapting to the environment; they treated their own work seriously in the Service-Learning programme; they encouraged each other, with great teamwork. Though the work was tiring, seeing that my schoolmates were having fun working, I felt at ease. During the days in Yunnan, I opened up my mind and reunited with my schoolmates into a giant heart, which bumps energetically and vigorously…

Question for you: How will you honor the legacy of your school?
I have worked for many years. And the biggest change that the trip had made in me is that I now have a broader mind. No longer am I occupied only with work, the city I live in and my own home, but I also care about social needs. Before going to Yunnan, I had focused on work and was insensitive and unenthusiastic about things outside of work. The experience in Yunnan gave me the chance to learn and empathise with the feelings of the local children, learn about the needs of the villagers, and to communicate and serve together with Lingnan students. This experience improved my empathy and made me understand that helping others is helping the self. It also improved my sensitivity to cross-cultural communication, my enthusiasm when doing customer service, and my ability to get along with colleagues. When you have another world in mind, you have a different mindset. And when I meet troubles in my own world and feel like withdrawing into a hard shell, the other, broader world in my mind, with its needs and emotions, soothes me and brings me out of my hard shell.

Compared with that world, shouldn’t I feel grateful and satisfied for what I have today? In the face of changes and uncertainty, wouldn’t it be a good choice to have an open mind, relax, and take it easy? After all, the world is big, and real. Returning to Guangzhou, walking in the century-old Hong Lok campus of Lingnan, I see the donations made by old graduates of Lingnan and see the pride of Lingnan students for being a Lingnan alumnus. I have been thinking, what is the essence of the Lingnan spirit? “Education for Service”? “Red-and-Grey People”? Or “Lingnan Cow”? They are all part of the Lingnan spirit! They all have something in common - enthusiasm: enthusiasm for people, in a sincere and truthful attitude; enthusiasm for work, in an optimistic and progressive attitude; and enthusiasm for help when it is needed. Every year, numerous Lingnan graduates return to Lingnan for a reunion on Alumni Day. In them is the irresistible enthusiasm and passion for Lingnan.
It’s been over six months since I returned home from the teaching programme in Yunnan co-organised by Deloitte and Lingnan University. I still keep the tutor badge that I used to wear on my chest, proudly on my office desk.

I was born on Teachers’ Day. Since then, I have met many teachers that have helped me a lot. Therefore, the word “tutor” really has important meaning to me.

A teacher teaches us the fundamental relationship between oneself and the society, the knowledge and skills necessary to live in the society, and helps us answer questions in the learning process. Before my visit to Yunnan, I had been asking myself: during merely one week, what could I bring to the local students beyond my limited knowledge of English?

It was by chance that I got the opportunity of going to Yunnan. My boss had an unexpected business meeting overseas, so he left this precious opportunity and important task to me and another colleague. Then we got busy with the preparations. During this process, the Lingnan students really impressed me. From the organising of a teleconference with people from all over the country to the preparation of teaching materials, these Lingnan students, though fresh at university, showed their admirable overall perspective and executive ability through each task. When the preparation of the teaching materials was almost finished, I also gave some of my opinions on them. They reacted quickly to my suggestions, re-did the teaching materials, and finally had them printed on time. Even coming from a professional service organisation like Deloitte China, I had to admire their organisational ability and efficiency.

The first two days after our arrival in Yunnan, students of Lingnan University and the Yunnan Nationalities University and I immediately started preparing for the teaching, making appointments with teachers, discussing teaching plans, arranging visits to the Senior Grade 3 classes, planning extracurricular activities of film appreciation and career development exchange meetings. With all the busy and exciting work, two days passed quickly. The next activity would be to meet the senior students of Wuding No.1 Secondary School. According to the teachers at the school, the students were very excited to learn about our upcoming visit. This made us happy and a bit nervous.

We knew they had expectations, but we had no idea how we could carry out the teaching and tutoring and what goals we would achieve in only a couple of weeks. What worried us the most was the fear that the students would end up learning nothing from us and that we would let them down.

The teaching programme began on schedule. As we had expected, the students there were sensitive and shy, afraid of asking questions and communicating with us tutors at the beginning.

But in their eyes, we clearly saw their eagerness and yearning to learn from us about new things in the outside world. Between classes, we came downstairs from the teaching building and some bolder students crowded before the railings of the corridor, looking with curiosity at us “outsiders”. Some summoned up the courage to wave at us; and when we waved back, they shyly dodged back into the crowd.

After several English Corner activities, the students became braver and closer to us; then we had some interactive communication. They told us that in the rural area few families would even send their children to school, much less university; it was their dream to leave the mountain by entering a university, and they were trying hard despite the cruel gap between reality and dream. After class, many students told us their suggestions, ideas and questions by writing them down on a slip of paper.

I still remember that among these slips, one was written: “Dear tutors, Thank you all for coming here. Although in the short time of one month, you might not be able to teach us everything or change anything, your arrival has brought us a very important thing: confidence.”

I was deeply touched by these words. Young as they are, they understand reality. What they learned during the teaching programme was English knowledge; but more importantly, they know what they are in greater need of. In such an unfavourable living and learning environment, trying hard while knowing that they might fail, they know very well that having faith is the most important thing.

They must also know, however, that entering a university is not the only way out for them; and not entering a university is not necessarily a failure. Getting a better education, leaving the mountain, and finding a good job, this is success by the most ordinary definition. But for these students, they are successful so long as they have tried, even if they cannot take this path in the end.

It is now March. I believe those students are now busy preparing for the college-entrance examination. We are very concerned about their conditions. Today, I have also gained a better understanding of the meaning of being a tutor: I was a tutor for those students; at the same time, they were also my, or our, tutors.

Having written so much, I just want to say, in the end, to those students: I wish you all good luck!
I spent New Year’s Day of 2009 in Gezhangla Village. Since I returned from the village, I have been thinking that, although we have spent so many days and so many New Year’s Days in the world, few are ever unforgettable; but the memory of the days and the New Year’s Day that I spent in Gezhangla Village have been lingering in my mind. It might have been the pursuit of such a special feeling and memory that made me feel like I had to take part in the project.

Located to the north of Kunming City, Gezhangla Village is a village under Wuding County, Yunnan Province. As a city-dweller, despite my previous experience, though limited, of living in a rural community, I was shocked by the living conditions of the villagers during the visit. Most of those families had virtually no money and usually had family members with diseases. I often ask myself how I would feel if I were living for a long time under such conditions. Yet surprisingly, among the households that we visited, over 90% said that they were satisfied with their current living conditions. This makes me feel ashamed: I’m not a butterfly; so how do I know the joy of being one? And in the depth of my heart, I feel the greatness of the Chinese farmers: their endurance, diligence, perseverance, optimism, and wisdom. I realised when we were conducting our survey that they might not know what we were referring to, as they had never been asked those questions. But most of them quickly understood with just a little explanation. Their comprehension ability and clear thinking logic has deeply impressed me and, for the first time, I realised that if the Chinese farmers could receive a good education, they would have infinite potential. And never will I forget their eyes, shining and filled with wisdom.

Gezhangla Village is not the poorest village that I have ever been to, because, thanks to its humid soil and the special texture of the soil, the villagers could still make a living by growing peas or tobacco. But it is the most beautiful village that I’ve ever visited. I forgot to take my camera there, perhaps out of excessive excitement. But the azure sky, the yellow corncobs, green pea shoots, and the intoxicating fresh air are some things that always come to mind when I think of Gezhangla Village. In this sense, I admire the happiness of the Gezhangla villagers and I agree with their satisfaction with life. Actually, happiness depends on what a person focuses on rather than what he/she has or doesn’t have. At night, together with the Lingnan students, we went to see the stars at night. I believe that for them, the sky decorated with glistening stars must also be an everlasting memory of Gezhangla Village.

Different people may have different memories about Gezhangla Village. But there is so much that we could never forget: their welcoming, smiling faces, the dining tables adorned with green grass, the bonfire evening party, the affectionate singing, the purity and innocence of the primary school students, and the collective dances that we made up. The trip to Gezhangla Village was supposed to be a poverty alleviation program, for the purpose of providing whatever help each of us could; but upon my return, I realise that I have gained so much. I am thankful to those simple and honest people who were willing to give so much and to Lingnan students for their hard work and contribution. When I left Gezhangla Village, I hoped to do something more for it; but at the same time, I vaguely hoped that it would not change much: I hope the children there will not forget their folk songs because of our visit and I hope that they can always feel the happiness and satisfaction that their parents and ancestors have felt.

**Question for you:** Have you got any unforgettable memories during the process of helping others?
The Village Adoption Project in Yunnan in My Eyes

KWONG Chun-kit
Assistant Executive Director of 5loaves2fish Office, Hong Kong Christian Council

During the three years that I promoted the Village Adoption Plan in Yunnan as a member of Hong Kong Christian Council, I felt really lucky to have been able to work together with Deloitte China and the OSL of Lingnan University. The interactive collaboration between the three parties has ensured mutual support in resources and knowledge, so that the programme could be developed successfully and has provided a platform for people of different backgrounds, ages, language systems, regions, and skills to use their talent and to become friends with each other, sharing the same experience during the multiple trips from and to Gezhangla Village.

There are many non-government organisations (NGOs) in Hong Kong. Despite their different missions and working modes, they all face the same obstacle: lack of human resources and material resources, which undermines the scale and depth of the volunteer service week. Therefore, even though they have a grand vision and concept, they can hardly make it come true due to insufficient resources. The three-party collaboration in this project is like an equilateral triangle, with each party making equal contribution in terms of the investment, roles, and functions; meanwhile, they supplement and support each other, providing different resources and strengths during the development of the project and thereby benefiting from each other.

Investment of resources - Deloitte China has provided more than just financial support for this project; moreover, it selects its employees in Mainland China and in Hong Kong to promote the specific programmes in the village so as to establish an attitude and relationship network based on mutual respect, learning, and appreciation between the company and the village, employees and the villagers, to enrich each other’s resources, and to interactively fine-tune their understanding and direction of development.

Project framework - Lingnan University has provided the academic research methods and the framework for effectiveness evaluation so that the services during the three years could be evaluated using more objective data, which in turn ensures the sustainability of the project. The young university students that have participated in this project have gained obvious personal development and expanded their own vision. In the spirit of “learning to serve and serving to learn”, the project has cultivated them into social citizens with clear direction.

Experience sharing - Hong Kong Christian Council has played the role of an intermediary in the project, assisting in the establishment of the initial relationship between the project sponsor and the target village, sharing its experience of similar work promoted in other regions, and assisting the participants of each party to organise their individual experience and the whole experience of the project so that following projects can have something to reference and the effectiveness of this project can be sustained.

As one of the NGOs working quietly in Hong Kong, we believe that the above achievements are a result of the rapport and mutual support between the three parties.

During the project, besides the support of the partnering organisations, I have also been deeply impressed with the relationship set up between the participants and the villagers, who are like friends and family to each other. In my last visit to the village at the beginning of 2010, I learned of the death of the village head He Mei-kwong. A Lingnan teacher and I attended his funeral. His passing left us in great sorrow. The villagers walked one by one to Mrs. He to express their sympathy and to console her. Also some villagers came to us, expressing their appreciation for the warm personality and conduct of He when he was alive; they particularly expressed their gratitude to the late Mr He for introducing the Village Adoption Project which greatly improved the conditions of the village. Hearing their remarks, we couldn’t stop shedding tears, both in sorrow for his passing and our happiness for winning the approval and recognition of the villagers and for witnessing the gradual achievements and development of the village under the hard work of the villagers.

Question for you: How can different sectors in our society work hand-in-hand to help the needy people?
Thoughts and Feelings of Other Participants
Mr Song, one of the villagers treated us to lunch with his family. We were very honoured to be served with brand-new chopsticks and also pork and chicken which they normally have during the festive season.

CHONG Ka-ka, Lingnan University

I feel very lucky to have been able to participate in this Village Adoption Project in Yunnan. Had it not been for this trip to Gezhangla Village, I would never have imagined that the roads that the villagers walk on are so rugged and muddy, that the water supply in the village is so scarce, and the people here are so hardworking and honest. Nor would I have known that the food that the children in the village want to eat the most is the meat bun, which is the least favorite food of children in big cities.

WANG Tian, Lingnan University
Some people may be suspicious and doubt how much aid we, ordinary people who are not supermen, could provide within such a short time. Through this visit to the village, I have learned that so long as we have tried, the help and support we are able to provide, however limited, will lead to results that may be better than we had ever imagined. We spent over one year building a friendly relationship and trust with the villagers. In the village, especially during home visits, we were received with great enthusiasm and hospitality. On the night before we left the village, the villagers came to express their thankfulness by proposing toasts and singing for us. All this touched us deeply.

LAI Joanne, Deloitte Hong Kong

I stayed in the mountain for three and a half days. Although the living conditions there are poorer than in the city, I sincerely felt happy in the depth of my heart. When I was in Suzhou, I would always carry my cell phone with me and wouldn’t leave it for a single moment. I would frequently check for new messages or call history for fear of missing any calls. The cell phone reflects my loneliness. In the busy crowd, only by clinging to my cell phone could I feel others’ care and concern for me. In Gezhangla Village, however, I left my cell phone in my bag and seldom thought about it. Even when I received short messages, I was reluctant to reply. Surrounded by the children, loneliness and solitude were far far away. Now I completely agree with someone’s opinion that happiness can come from very simple things, like sitting in the sun while watching children play games.

WANG Ya-qiu, Deloitte Suzhou
In Gezhangla Village, the use of body language is of equal importance to verbal communication. A granny, who is so old that all her teeth were gone, would burst into laughter every time she saw us greeting someone, because she couldn’t understand Mandarin Chinese. Every time when we couldn’t understand each other’s dialects, we would burst into laughter and then start to use our body language during the family visit. In this Yunnan visit, body language, in conjunction with verbal language, helped us to communicate with the villagers and get closer to them.

CHOI Yee-kwan, Lingnan University

In sharp contrast to the hardship and poverty that we saw in Gezhangla Village were the enthusiasm, hospitality and simplicity of the villagers and the innocence of the children. I chatted with a cooking girl, and she made a pair of insoles for me during the night. I took some photos for the children, and they gave us all types of little gifts when we were about to leave. We gave out a little, yet they would take it to heart and do as much as they could in return. Their sincerity shocked and touched those of us who live in a relatively indifferent environment in the city, and made us marvel.

CHEN Xiao-chuan, Deloitte Beijing
Although I live in a different environment and come from a different cultural background than Deloitte China employees and Lingnan students, I have learned quite a lot from them during these days. I used to be pessimistic and conservative; it was them who encouraged me to open my mind, to communicate with those beside me, to look at things with optimism, to enjoy every moment of life, and to liberate my own thoughts. After the journey, now that I look at myself, I have changed!

I have been thinking, as a Yunnan person, should I continue to take my life for granted, to feel proud of myself for being a university student and for the little achievement that I have made? From now on, it is time for me to take action; it is time for me to do something for my hometown, because it’s my obligation and responsibility.

WANG Tao, Yunnan Nationalities University
After going through the nearly three-week teaching programme, I grew up a lot. I used to be nervous when asked a question by the teacher in class; now I can stand in front of a large group and teach classes fluidly and calmly. I used to regard myself as incapable of many things. Now I try everything with self-confidence and tell myself that I can do it. I used to be self-centered. Now I understand that united, we can do much more. I used to be the one who was always helped by others. Now I am able to help others... But this won't be all - I’ll do even better. And all these changes that have happened in me wouldn't have been possible without the trip to Yunnan, because then I wouldn't be able to realise that I have potential. Just as Dr. Ma said, to serve others is to help the self. I am really thankful for being given this opportunity to show myself and to improve myself. I feel very happy, because now I understand that real happiness isn't about how much you give but about how much less things bother you.

YANG Fang, Yunnan Nationalities University

Perhaps in the eyes of China and the rest of the world, Yunnan is a beautiful place but few ever know the other side of Yunnan - that it is a backward and poverty-stricken place, that many places here in Yunnan don’t have power supply, that many people do not have enough food or clothes, that many children do not have a classroom so they can only attend classes in the scorching sun or in the pouring rain, that many children do not even know the taste of bread... This time, so many brave Lingnan students and Deloitte employees have done such a meaningful thing. As a student, as a child of the Yunnan people, I really would like to say: “Thank you, for your hard work and help!”

LIU Wen-long, Yunnan Normal University
Through close contact with the villagers and primary school students of Gezhangla Village over several days, I have gained a relatively complete understanding and knowledge of the living conditions, including economy, education, culture, customs, and sanitation, of the villagers of the Yi nationality village in Yunnan. As a city-dweller, I have learned much more about the modern society in China.

What impressed and inspired me the most was the dedication and commitment of Lingnan teachers and students and the philanthropists of Hong Kong Christian Council to the enterprise of social service. Not only do they donate money and materials, but they also visit, in person, the households in the remote countryside to do field investigation and to help the villagers solve their practical difficulties. Such continuous and lasting dedication and commitment to social service is something that we lack in our education and in real life.

WU Sheng-tao, Deloitte Beijing

During this trip, my favourite part was the sharing every night, when I could listen to others’ feelings and experiences and be inspired by others’ words. I still remember a question asked by a team member: “Do we really know what the villagers need?” Indeed, we should think about this. Was it only our wishful thinking that we know what they need? With good intentions, we might be copying city practice and applying it rigidly to the village. Therefore, asking questions and listening are very important. Though we were doing volunteer service in the village, I feel that we have learned from them far more than they ever did from us.

LAi Wing-ki, Lingnan University
“What do you expect of the three-year project?”

“Hope.” The children answered.

“You want it more than gifts?”

“Yes. So long as you come to see us, we don’t need gifts.”

This trip, from serving to learning, from searching to committing, from enjoying to feeling grateful, has made me re-evaluate the meaning of life.

Just as Mother Theresa said, “Be faithful in small things because it is in them that your strength lies.” During my contact with the villagers, I learned about what it means to be happy because you are satisfied. What’s simple is beautiful. There are so many things in life that we should be thankful for. From now on, my life is already connected with that of the friends in the village of Yunnan.

CHAN Chun-ho, Lingnan University

What I remember best is the visit to each household to do a survey. Last year, I studied the Research Method of Social Sciences. What I learned in the class was very useful during this survey. There is a lot of experience and knowledge that you cannot learn from the book. For example, when we were interviewing a housewife, her husband was also there listening to us. Therefore, for many questions, she thought quite long before answering them. We realised that it was because she was embarrassed to say some things in front of her husband. During the service, I have realised that we are able to love and help others, which really makes me happy. Giving is better than taking, I truly agree with this. In the future, I will spend more time to care about those around me.

LAU Kin-wai, Lingnan University
We spent far more time on preparation than on the trip itself. But what I have learned will benefit me for life. The programme, in which students play a leading role, has provided us with a very good platform to apply our professional expertise and to gain real experience outside the classroom.

What I didn’t expect was that I, who wanted to help the villagers, ended up being helped by them to find my faith. Their optimistic and sanguine attitude towards life, their enthusiastic and hospitable reception, and the pure and simple expression in their eyes have made me feel the precious affections between humans, thereby enhancing my faith in service groups and becoming more determined about my life goal.

CHOW Wai-to, Lingnan University
The early spring of March in the village in Yunnan was chilly, but the smiling faces of the children there made us warm, like a cup of spirits. What attracted me the most was their purity and shyness.

At the time of departure, when a child put a red scarf around my neck, I felt a tremendous responsibility. I cried, not because of the imminent departure or sympathy for them, but because if we didn’t continue to shoulder this responsibility, it would hurt these lovely children and these simple and honest villagers. I believe we can and will carry on and our programme will be continued by future volunteers.

HАО Yu, Deloitte Shenzhen

The pure and innocent eyes of the children, the simple and sincere emotions of the villagers not only touched us with the warmth of home, but also gave us knowledge about the honest and simple ways of the villagers in the mountain. In addition, we learned more about the life of farmers and now better understand our position and responsibility in society. After living with the villagers for a few days, I became more concerned about the life of the underprivileged people and children in the mountain, and in this society that is full of material desires, my soul was cleansed by this trip. Indeed, we can’t do great things for them. But from them, we have learned that, in the current world with soaring economic development, there are still some people in poverty. It’s high time that we paid attention to this group of people.

SUEN Li-yuan, Yunnan Nationalities University
During the five years and four nights in Gezhangla Village, what I remember most deeply was a household with three children. Among them the 9-year-old son caught pneumonia and, due to lack of timely treatment and consequent complications, lost his hearing, speaking and self-control ability. I feel very sad and sorry for him.

And finally, I am thankful to Deloitte China and Lingnan University for giving me the opportunity to join the visit, which has made me understand that the development of a country is not only the responsibility of the government, but also that of the citizens, especially us, the younger generation.

SHIU Yee-ping, Lingnan University

What I have seen and heard during the three days’ visit have verified the experts’ comment that there is an increasing gap between the cities and the countryside. To change the living standards of remote areas and develop their economies should be the goal of our generation and involves policies, economics and politics. Previously, every time I thought about this, I would feel puzzled and helpless, believing that I as an individual couldn’t help. However, through this activity, I have learned that there is something that I can do, which can be valuable and helpful to others.

I am also moved by the enthusiasm of the school teachers and the villagers. Within that short time, we organised a series of relevant activities, such as a health forum, "flue-cured" tobacco forum, information sessions on cash crops like walnut trees, and an evening party with singing, dancing, and opusculum performances. This was indeed amazing. I sincerely hope that in the future I can do more things to again experience the high expectations of the children and the enthusiasm and hospitality of the villagers.

CHEN Xiao-hua, Deloitte Beijing
During this trip, I got to know different types of people and formed a greater aspiration to make a contribution to the motherland. The enthusiasm of the students of Yunnan Nationalities University infected and impressed me because they had an especially strong motivation and aspiration to improve the living conditions of the residents in the countryside of Yunnan. I also admired the working attitude of Deloitte employees. They put aside their position and worked hand in hand with the students. They would express their insightful opinions when studying a question, while playing joyfully with the villagers and children. Although we are all different, we share the same goal, which is to improve the living conditions of the villagers in Yunnan.

YAU Man-shan, Lingnan University

We often played with the local children and dined with the local residents on the ground. At Wuding No. 1 Secondary School, I talked to a girl about her plan after graduation. She said staunchly that she wanted to study at Peking University and then immediately added that she would come back to the village after graduation to contribute to the development of her poverty-stricken hometown. Her words touched me and made me think of the students in Hong Kong: if they also had such staunch aspirations and such passion for their hometown, what would Hong Kong look like?

WAI Ming-tong, Deloitte Hong Kong
Having visited Gezhangla Village several times, I have witnessed the changes that have taken place in the village head, local government officials, and the villagers. Their faith and confidence in us was shown by the smiles on their faces. We also received warm and generous receptions by villagers when doing family visits.

I hope that we can use our expertise and experience to improve the economy of the village and to help villagers grow good-quality crops (though this might be overseen by the provincial government). Once the villagers earn more money, they can improve their standard of living, repairing their houses and the roads.

FOK Mabel, Deloitte Hong Kong

I have heard many real stories in this project and the most touching was the devotion of the participants to the project. Our family visits went smoothly: the villagers shared their lives and stories with us without reserve; the children treated us like old friends rather than strangers. All this suggests the hard work and selfless contribution made by many people to the project.

The end of one journey is the beginning of another. I’m looking forward to the reunion of our team, to the next journey, and to the reunion with the villagers and children in Gezhangla Village.

YEUNG Shan-shan, Lingnan University
I really enjoyed those visits, not just because I was doing something good, but also because those visits changed my thoughts. I believe that you would agree with me that our previous work has won much approval and recognition, at least in the village. As a Christian, I feel very happy when the villagers get practical help and their conditions are improved. But at the same time, I keep reminding myself not to be conceited and self-satisfied. Otherwise, the motivation of the helpers would become impure. I am thankful to God for giving me this opportunity to feel this way and believing in God and for the different things we each have obtained in the good deed.

KWAN Kwok-bo, Volunteer nurse

Four visits to the village during three years. Many things have changed, obviously, including me. I know better how to be grateful. Every time I returned home from the trip to the village, I felt that my soul had been cleansed. The village has undergone many changes; in terms of hardware changes, roads have been repaired and constructed by the local government in support of our project, the school dormitory has been built and water pipes have been laid for Gezhangla Village. However, I believe that the software changes are what's most important, such as the improvement of the sanitation and healthcare knowledge of the children and villagers after our training. Perhaps it is hard to immediately quantify the effects, but I believe that these are the methods that can truly help them improve their living.

I once made a wish that, if possible, I would visit the village every year, to see my old friends and see the growth of the children in the village, just like watching my own children growing up. I hope that my wish comes true.

HUI Chung-sum, Deloitte Hong Kong
Unique Happiness and Path: Photo Album
Pure and Simple - "They feel happier than many of us."
Children's dreams - "What they need most is not money, but love and communication."
Building Connections - Human to human, heart to heart
Looking Ahead - "I have a strong urge to go back to this bustling place where I can continue to celebrate my life through energy and commitment to others."
When you are in Gezhangla Village...

This is your job.

This is your dormitory.

This is your fortune.

This is your classroom.

This is your home.

This is the way to school.
This is the way heading out of the village.

This is your bedroom.

This is your village.

This is your kitchen.

This is your sky.

This is your toilet.
Acknowledgements and Partners

Co-organisers

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Hong Kong Christian Council

The Hong Kong Christian Council is the ecumenical body of Christian churches, organisations and institutions in Hong Kong. Founded in 1954, the Council promotes a united witness and outreach to the whole society. It is the visible sign of church unity in Hong Kong, promoting the spirit and work of the ecumenical movement.

Hong Kong Christian Council promotes social service through the “Five Loaves and Two Fish Project•ACT” which has been operating since the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s. The Project is concerned about the social changes and needs of Hong Kong, China and the world to develop support and share resources. The Project also works to tackle rural poverty and support medical care, sanitation, education, emergency care, and post-disaster reconstruction by carrying out a variety of fundraising activities, in the hope of alleviating poverty and improving the living conditions of people in disaster-stricken areas for the long term.

Other supporting organisations

- Wuding County Education Bureau
- Gaoqiao Town Government
- Xijula Village Committee
- Yunnan Normal University
- Yunnan Nationalities University
- Wuding No. 1 Secondary School
The Yi people are one of the 55 ethnic minority groups in China. They live primarily in Yunnan, Sichuan, Guizhou, and Guangxi and have a population of over 7 million. The Yi people speak Yi of the Tibeto-Burman Group of the Sino-Tibetan Language Family and use syllabic characters dominated by the rectangular shape. Most Yi people know Chinese and Chinese characters; only less than 10% of the Yi people still write syllabic characters.

Social structure
The traditional Yi ethnic group is a paternal clan society (where the family structure is based on paternal blood relationship), in which fathers assume the duties of organising and managing daily life, guiding society’s ethics and moral, and coordinating wars. The old Yi society adopted the slavery system, dividing people into different social classes, such as Black Yi (the slave owners and royals) and White Yi (the slaves). Starting from the Qing Dynasty, such a social hierarchy was gradually abolished.

Economy
The main source of income for the Yi people is farming. The crops include wheat, corn, rice, potatoes, barley, and beans. Their family sideline production includes livestock farming, fishing, weaving, and herb gathering. Today, the Yi people still mainly earn a living from farming, while working in secondary and tertiary industries in the city.

Culture
Costume
The national costume of the Yi people reflects four characteristics: their esthetic view that black is royal and yellow is beautiful; their living habits and their sense of honor; their brave and heroic personality; and their comprehension of and reverence for nature.

Handicrafts
The Yi people are good at making handicrafts, including gold and silver utensils and jewelries, embroidery, lacquerwork, colored drawing or pattern, hand-made wool fabric, and musical instruments.

Marriage customs
The Yi people adopt the monogamy system and have customs of fasting and marriage by capture. Usually, several days before the marriage, the husband-to-be sends out several strong young men to capture the wife-to-be at her house.

Food and the eating habit
The Yi people take two meals a day: lunch and supper. They most often eat corn, potato, and buckwheat. At every meal, they eat a lot of vegetables and little meat.

Traditional festivals
The Torch Festival falls on the 24th of June in the lunar calendar and lasts for three days. During the Torch Festival, the Yi people carry a torch around the house and the farmland to drive away pests. The Yi people hold rich and colorful activities to celebrate the festival: men wrestle and dance, while women sing and dance. The Spring Festival is also a very important festival for the Yi people, who will kill sheep in celebration.

Music and dance
The Yi people love singing and dancing. They may celebrate a festival by singing and dancing the whole night. They will sing different songs and dance different dances while drinking and sharing their joy.
About Lingnan University
Lingnan University is located in Tuen Mun, Hong Kong. The mission of Lingnan University, whose motto is ‘Education for Service’, lies in Liberal Arts Education. The university endeavours to provide students with an excellent education that amalgamates the liberal arts traditions of the east and west. With a strong emphasis on personal development, students are trained to think independently, exercise judgment, care for others and readily take on responsibilities in the ever-changing environments in Hong Kong, the Asian region and the rest of the world.

As a student-oriented liberal arts institution, Lingnan University focuses on the relationship between the teaching staff and students, where instructors and their charges interact with and learn from one another. To this end, the university’s student population has always been maintained at around 2,300 to facilitate smaller classes. This has also allowed 75% of the student body to experience hostel life in the campus. Community service is an indispensable aspect of campus life in Lingnan University. The university provides students with many opportunities to engage in various kinds of community service. It even set up the Office of Service-Learning to co-ordinate service-learning courses – the first of its kind in Hong Kong.

About Office of Service-Learning, Lingnan University
The Office of Service-Learning (OSL) was set up in 2006. It offers learning opportunities for students through service provision, whereby students, under the guidance of course instructors and service agencies, can develop positive attitudes and concrete skills, and integrate their knowledge through participation in service-learning programs. The service-learning components have been implanted across the curriculum since 2004-05. OSL seeks to provide a vital University-community link so that students can find fulfillment in academic pursuit and serving those in need. The followings are the missions:

- To promote Lingnan University’s motto “Education for Service”
- To provide reciprocal benefits to the participants and the community
- To produce a positive developmental impact on student learning and growth
- To enhance learning and teaching efficacy through Service-Learning

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