

Van: Junko Mitani, unicef
Verzonden: dinsdag 18 juni 2002 22:51
Aan: Dorine Thomissen; vluchtelingenwerkrijnmond
Onderwerp: Re:China/orphanages

Dear Ms. Thomissen,

Thank you for your email of June 6, 2002, and your concern about the situation of orphaned children in China. Please find below general situation for orphaned children in China. We are copying this message to Mr. Colin G. Mitchell, Regional Representative of UNHCR in Beijing, for his information because it is UNHCR, among UN agencies, which provides necessary assistance to individuals who seek temporary protection or refugee status in a third country and also facilitates the return of those including minors to their places of origin when their claims are not accepted by a third country. If you need further clarification about the conditions at a specific center for orphaned children to support the claim, or would like to request special care for the returnees who are minors, we believe UNHCR is in the best position to assist you.

Regarding the general situation of the orphanages, we can say that it has improved drastically during the past several years based on the available information and data as well as observations made during various visits to different orphanages although it is not possible to obtain a clear picture of the overall situation of orphans in the country.

The improvement has been made not only in the facilities, physical conditions and environment of the orphanages but also in the software aspects as they have been developing capacity to provide psycho-social care for the orphans while physical development of the child was the main concern in the past. These are germane to 3 different kinds of institutes as you indicated:

- 1) orphanages or child welfare institutes (CWI) as they are called here;
- 2) social welfare institutes which are for both senior citizens and abandoned/orphaned children - such institutes are more prevalent in rural areas where the local governments have not been able to establish separate institutes for children; and
- 3) street children's protection centres, which are temporary shelters that provide protection and basic services for street children in urban areas.

We would however like to underline again that the above mentioned assessment is made based on the existing information and available data that we have access to, and that efforts to improve both physical conditions and the quality of psycho-social services will need to continue especially in rural areas.

The capacity of existing institutes to accommodate the seemingly increasing number of abandoned and orphaned children, however is not adequate and the government even acknowledges this. Recently, under the policy called, "Socialisation of Social Welfare" the government has been making substantial efforts to develop alternative ways and forms of care for them such as domestic adoption, family foster care and residential care for abandoned, orphaned and even for street children.

Care for adolescents is an issue that needs to be further looked into. The number of adolescents in CWIs and SWIs is relatively small as most of the children get adopted or taken care of by other forms of care when they are young. However, those who are left out, mainly disabled children, continue to stay in these institutes. The capacity of the existing 127 Street Children's Protection Centres in the country is much less adequate, and there is a significant implication to the welfare of these vulnerable adolescents (mainly 12-16 years old) as they frequently become victims of criminal activities or fall into conflict with the law. The

Ministry of Civil Affairs is aware of this and therefore they are trying to expand services through the existing Street Children's centres and at the same time develop alternative forms of quality care for such adolescents.

UNICEF has been supporting the efforts made by the Ministry of Civil Affairs in improving the quality of care for this and other groups of vulnerable children.

Thank you again for your efforts and concern for the well being of children. Please let us know if there is any other information or assistance that UNICEF might provide.

Best regards,

Junko Mitani, Assistant Communications Officer, UNICEF Beijing

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CC: Mr. Masahiro Ono, Chief, Protection and Community Service section, UNICEF Beijing

Mr. David Parker, Senior Programme Coordinator, UNICEF Beijing

Mr. Colin Mitchell, Area Representative UNHCR Beijing

Forward Header

Subject: Re:China/orphanages

Author: Junko Mitani

Date: 6/10/02 2:37 PM

Dear Ms. Thomiseen,

Thank you for your message. This is just an interim reply to acknowledge the receipt of your message. We will reply shortly.

Thank you and best regards,

Junko Mitani

Assistant Communication Officer

UNICEF China

Reply Separator

Subject: China/orphanages

Author: "Dorine Thomissen"

Date: 6/6/02 12:11 PM

> Dear Sir, madam,

>

> My name is Dorine Thomissen. I work for the Refugee Aid Council in
> Rotterdam, The Netherlands. We provide country information to lawyers
> who defend asylum cases. Currently we receive a lot of questions in
> cases of unaccompanied Chinese adolescent orphans who ask for the
> protection of the Dutch government. According to the Dutch ministry of
> Justice they don't need the Dutch protection because they can go to an
> orphanage in China.

>

> According to a Human Rights Watch report from 1996 "Death by Default",
> the situation in Chinese orphanages is horrible. Recent country

> information provided by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs states
> that the quality improved considerably the last years.

>

> Therefore I would like to ask you some questions about the recent
> possibilities and conditions for Chinese adolescent orphans in an
> orphanage or other institute in China. I know about the existence of
> three kinds of institutes: orphanages, social welfare institutes and
> street children protection centres. But are there enough places in
> these institutes, especially for adolescents? Is there a possibility
> for a Chinese adolescent orphan to find a place in one of these
> institutes? And how is the recent conditions/quality in these
> institutes, especially for adolescents?

>

> I hope you can help me further. Thank you beforehand.

>

> Yours faithfully,

>

> Dorine Thomissen

> Refugee Aid Council Rotterdam, The Netherlands

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