The Livelihood Recovery Project in Sichuan, China

Employment situation in Qingping after the mudslide of 13 August 2010

Report by Meng Zeng, Project Coordinator, ILO

On 15 September 2010 ILO, jointly with IFRC and accompanied by the Mianzhu Labor Bureau, made a field visit to Qingping. For ILO it was the first visit to the area after it had been hit by a mudslide on 13 August. The purpose of the mission was to see how that Sichuan earthquake-stricken community was coping with the consequences of the recent catastrophe.

In Qingping Square hundreds of farmers were taking part in a job fair which had been organized by the Mianzhu Labor Bureau. Men and women, young and old, had come to the fair to seek jobs. Twenty-two companies participated in the event, intending to recruit local people. Various trades were represented, including finance, insurance, machinery, electronic technology, transportation, security services, restaurant services, liquor, tea and food processing.

**The job fair in Qingping Square**

 Visitors were participating with interest, browsing the booths for information about job opportunities and selection criteria. Where the chance of getting hired was big, the candidate would take the discussion with the company forward. If an agreement between the two parties was found, an employment contract could be signed on-the-spot.
At one corner of the square, a booth was recruiting trainees for the Livelihood Recovery Project. Farmers were requesting project brochures and asking questions about training opportunities. The staff answered their questions carefully and patiently, and wrote down their name and the training courses they were interested in.

Farmers are registered for the Livelihood Recovery Project
Ms. Meng Yantao

Ms. Meng Yantao is in her 40s and has been unemployed since the earthquake. She made a loan to reconstruct her house after the earthquake. Her family is encountering severe economic challenges due to her unemployment and loan. She came to the fair looking for a way to increase family income. She had participated in an animal husbandry class (pig raising) in the Livelihood Recovery Project before and had raised more than 10 pigs. However, most of her pigs were killed by the mudslide and only three are left in the pigsty. “The pig raising training I took last time was very informative and helpful”, she says, “The teacher taught us earnestly and patiently. But my pig farming ended in failure because of the mudslide. Now I want to attend the training again. This time, I want to learn how to raise chickens. Partly because it requires a smaller amount of money to start-up, partly because the price for organic chickens is high nowadays.” Her eyes are filled with eagerness to learn. “I really want to sit in the classroom as soon as possible, and go to class everyday to learn”, she concludes with a big smile.

Like Ms. Meng, many people lost income opportunities in the mudslide once again, after the massive earthquake that struck the province two years ago, while repayment for housing loans still remains a heavy burden. The demand for accessing skills trainings that ensure income generation or employment opportunities is therefore very high.
**Mr. Zhou Youde**

Mr. Zhou Youde is 41 years old and lives with his daughter, who is a junior high school student in Hanwang. His house collapsed in the earthquake and his wife left. He has been unemployed since the mine were he used to work was closed due to the mudslide. He is very interested in the training courses offered by the Livelihood Recovery Project. Initially, he wants to participate in a miner training: he had started to work as a phosphine miner when he was 16 years old and that was the only job he had been doing for about 25 years. Naturally, the miner course is the only one he is familiar with and he feels comfortable and confident to attend. “My only hope is to make enough money for my daughter’s education”, he says “I hope she will be able to leave this mountainous area”. Then he asks information about the other courses, and shows interest in the security guard training. He has never done that kind of job before, but “after so many years as a miner, I am interested in trying other jobs...” After some consideration, he decides to enroll in the course.

The contribution of the Livelihood Recovery Project is not limited to the skills training. Project beneficiaries are also provided with employment guidance which allows them to consider different career options in the changing local economic development situation.

After the job fair, the team had a chance to visit the areas affected by the mudslide. The road had been destroyed and houses had collapsed in the mudslide and were half-buried in the ground.
Houses damaged by the mudslide

![Houses damaged by the mudslide](image1)
![Houses damaged by the mudslide](image2)

The Qingping School, where the opening ceremony of the Livelihood Recovery Project had been held in March 2010, was unrecognizable.

The School of Qingping before the mudslide

![The School of Qingping before the mudslide](image3)
![The School of Qingping before the mudslide](image4)

The School of Qingping after the mudslide

![The School of Qingping after the mudslide](image5)
![The School of Qingping after the mudslide](image6)
A lady farmer, Ms. Liang Guanying, told her story to the team. Her daughter used to go to Qingping School, and got trapped in the mudslide.

**Ms. Liang Guanying**

“I recognized the Red Cross logo, I know you are helping us”, she said, with her eyes full of tears, “The earthquake and the mudslide made our life tough. But at this moment, I only want to thank you for what you have done for us. Thank you very much”.

Many people have experienced the same as Ms. Liang Guanying. They are all making efforts to create a better future. It’s a long journey, and they need help. The Livelihood Recovery Project engages in supporting them to gain a better life. There is hope!