

YIP Siu On

It is the first time I've ever joined a service trip and also the first time to go to a place so remote. Dabao Village was located in a valley surrounded by mountains that separate itself from the other "nearby" villages, by "nearby" it actually means a 2-hour travel by bus over bumpy and occasionally blocked roads. Like most people living in the city, more or less we all have bias towards those living in the remote rural areas. We may have thought that there is no clean water supply, no electricity, no proper disposal of waste, dirty toilets, all that we believed tends to reach a conclusion that life is hard living there. Thus when we were planning a service trip there, I often thought about what we could do to bring changes to the village. Well, it turned out some of our concerns are true. However, even though the villagers and the children there may not enjoy a life as affluent as we do in Hong Kong, life is not "hard" there. There in the village, people grow their own rice in front of their house and raise fish inside the water-filled field. There are no street lamps at night but only torches. There are no restaurants and every day we make our food with kind help from the villagers. There is even no mobile network coverage. Yet during the 3 days that I spent in the village, I found that a simple life is not necessarily a hard one because there is no need to be materialistic at all. We simply didn't *need* much. Often we talk about uplifting farmers and rural villagers from poverty, but in Dabao, at least the children there are rich in happiness. Instead of bringing changes to the village, I felt that the village had changed me.

One very important purpose of our trip is to provide health education to the villagers there. It turned out to be full of surprises. I remember planning a health education talk targeting adults in the village which materialized just a few hours after the idea was actually proposed. With full effort from the 20 of us, we put together whatever we have left to mount a "health promotion-fest". The response was unexpectedly good, with unforeseen assistance from the school children, who were actively bringing their parent friends to the night event. Not only did the children remember the key messages that we want to deliver during previous health education session, they also manage to spread the messages to their family. Their devotion and motivation to learn had far exceeded our expectation. It was an amazing experience teaching these energetic kids!