

Reflection on the trip to Daping

8th Oct – 10th Oct 2016

Two professors, Professor Tham and Professor Mak, led six civil engineering students in their second year, a trip to Daping Village, Guangxi Province, China. We supervised the construction work of the teacher's dormitory of Daping Primary School and observed three bridges in Rongshui which were defected from flooding.

This is my very first trip to Guangxi Province of China and it is also my first one with Project Mingde. It is my honour to be a part of this project, to contribute to this mission of providing infrastructure that improves the living conditions of those in need. Although it took us 20 hours to go back and forth, the lengthy travelling hours have not demolished our anticipation towards our visit to the primary school. There we met Engineer Luk, who was in charge of the on-site construction works. From him we gained technical knowledge on how some parts of the construction work of the dormitory were done, as well as the common practices of their construction routine. We noticed that some methods and standards vary from the ones we encounter in our city. Yet, we understand that there are limitations which refrain them from adopting certain methods and designs, for example, limited technicality and machinery. Here, Professor Mak gave a suggestion on their pipeline network in hopes of improving the efficiency of the drainage system and sanitary conditions of the bathrooms and toilets. I hope our further mission could be improving the safety levels of the construction workers on site, especially when they work underground and at high altitudes.

Our visit to Daping Primary School was concluded with meeting the primary one students followed by a warm welcoming lunch with the villagers. Then, we moved on to the bridges. The first bridge originally relied on a dead load for its stability, but the sand beneath the support were washed away, causing the support to tilt and the bridge deck to fall. The villagers then made a simple wooden bridge to fulfil their urgent need of crossing the river. The second one was in a comparatively better condition than the first one in terms of the secureness of the temporary bridge constructed. With welded steel pipes and a relatively good structural design, the bridge is safe and sound for heavier loads in comparison. The third bridge has a tilted support and fractured decks. Astonishingly, the bridge didn't collapse and were still in use by people and light vehicles. Two professors interacted with villagers to get a fundamental understanding of the cause of the destroyed and collapsed bridges, and gave preliminary suggestions on the structural design of the reconstruction of the bridges.

In the evening, we had a Chung Yang Festival dinner with members of the village committee. They served our meal with warm hospitality. That night, we stayed at a nearby hostel which was built on a bridge.

I am very grateful to have this valuable opportunity to interact with different stakeholders and to gain technical knowledge in this project. To communicate with villagers in mandarin who have specific local accents has been challenging yet rewarding. Despite my trivialness in this project, I wish my dedication would be of value to the progress of it. This is indeed a wholesome trip and another one would certainly be worthwhile.