

Building a library for a local secondary school in Vietnam (12th June – 29th July 2016)

In this summer, 13 Civil Engineering students and 7 Social Sciences students participated in the Vietnam Internship Programme for helping to build the library of a local secondary school and conduct need assessments in Tien Lu. Besides, we also taught living values classes for local secondary students and assisted in commune services. We experienced local customs, culture and life style during this meaningful and unforgettable trip.



Figure 1. Group photo in HK Airport

Construction of Library

Our main duties in the library project were to assist in the construction works and monitor the construction progress.

In the first week of construction, the foundation of library had been done by workers in order to meet the progress of project. We first divided into two groups to backfill the soil and deliver the bricks for brick wall construction. After that we participated in building the brick wall and the concreting of columns and beams. It was the first time for us to work as a construction worker. Although there was concrete leaving on our clothes, we were satisfied and enjoy the construction works.



Figure 2. Student constructing brick wall

In second week, all columns were completed and most of the brick wall was built. We were responsible to prepare the steel bars for the reinforcement of roofing. We used machine to cut the steel bars and used simple tools to bend the steel bars into hook-shaped or in 90-degree. We also unfixed the nails from wooden plates that would later be used to support the concreting of slabs.



Figure 3. Steel bending by student

From week 3 to 4, the concreting of slabs was completed with the supports of wooden plates and bamboos. We learnt from the workers on joining steel framework of window frames and also simple method in the concreting of channel covers by using bricks as mold. Besides, the building services was started to set up. Tubes and electricity wires were installed into the wall.



Figure 4. Concreting of channel cover

In week 5, the channel surrounding the library was almost done by constructing with bricks and mortar. Originally, there were nylon bags sticking below the wooden plates of the slabs to prevent the concrete from leaking. As the slabs had been hardened, the nylon bags were removed and the coating of the slabs, beams and wall with stucco was started.



Figure 5. Workers removing nylon bags by burning

In last week of the construction, after the flattening of ground, we helped in the indoor library decoration by drawing five pictures on the wall using acrylic paint. Moreover, we assisted in placing ceramic tiles on the concrete platform by filling the gap of tiles with mortar and white cement. We also transplanted three trees outside the library. After the construction of library, we helped to clean the floor of the school and library.



Figure 6. Students assisted in placing tiles

During the construction, we gained knowledge on simple construction techniques that never learnt before in Hong Kong and also shared our engineering knowledge with Social Sciences students.



Figure 7. Library decoration by students

Need Assessments

In week 2, Civil Engineering students helped Social Sciences students in conducting need assessments in the communes. We discussed with the local people on what they needed and what problems or facilities they thought requiring improvements. After that we analyzed the problems based on five categories, which were health, education, livelihood, capacity building and child issues, and made recommendations according to the problems.



Figure 8. Discussion with children on their needs

Besides, in week 3 and 4, we also conducted interviews with the secondary students, teachers, headmasters and government officials on studying the reading habits of the local children and evaluating the Wash, Sanitation and Health (WASH) situation in the communes. We learnt how to ask engagement, exploration and exit questions in order to make the interviews to be fluent and efficient. In week 6, we also assisted in household interviews with families of the most vulnerable children.



Figure 9. Group discussion on reading habit

Teaching Classes and Exhibition

Apart from construction and need assessments, we had classes with local children to teach them living values. Although there was language barrier, the students enjoyed the games and dramas that we played together. Exhibition was also organized in week 7. We held game booths, played the videos we made and delivered prizes to the participants. All children enjoyed the games and were satisfied with the exhibition.



Figure 10. Children receiving prizes during exhibition

Commune Services

Before the completion of the project, we also went to help the villagers in cleaning the cemetery of soldiers. We visited invalid families with commune leaders and gave presents to the soldiers to express our gratitude and respect.

Cultural Exchange

There were 5 interpreters joining us during the trip. They helped in the translation of Vietnamese documents and assisted in our communication with the local people. We learnt a lot of basic Vietnamese language from them and understood local culture with their supports. In leisure time, we together played games, watched movies and roller-skating. Although we came from different countries, we shared happiness and sadness, and developed close friendship.



Figure 11. Group photo after the completion of project

List of team members of this trip:

Teaching staffs:

Dr. Ryan C.P. Wong (Department of Civil Engineering)

Miss Jessie M.L. Chow (Faculty of Social Sciences)

Student participants from Department of Civil Engineering:

CHAN Chau Wong (Andy) (II)

CHAN Wing Chun (Bill) (II)

CHU Ka Fung (Kelvin) (II)

FONG Chun Wai (William) (III)

KWONG Yiu Choi (Kent) (III)

LING Kin Lam (Catherine) (II)

NG Kei On (Martin) (II)

SHEUNG Chin Ching (Macro) (II)

TSE Hoi Yan (Vicky) (II)

WONG Chun Kit (Philip) (II)

WONG SHEK Wan (Victor) (II)

YEUNG Bozco Yik Chun (II)

YU Chung Yin (James) (II)

Student participants from Faculty of Social Sciences:

Dolly Nawalkha (IV)

LI Po Kwan (Bonnie) (II)

NG Wai Pan (Bun) (II)

WEN Hui Rong (Ariel) (II)

WONG Ka Yi (Tiffany) (II)

YEUNG Oriana Hay Tung (II)

YUEN Baty (III)