

CHINA



Students from impoverished rural villages in Bijie, Guizhou province, have a sports lesson at a primary school built for them in Dafang county, Bijie.

PHOTOS BY LUO DAFU / FOR CHINA DAILY

Relocation of rural children gives them a chance to dream

Poverty relief policies are helping poor village families find new homes and futures

Zhu Yu had an unforgettable summer holiday as one of 12 girls from her community who performed dances in rural parts of Guizhou province in Southwest China.

When they performed sign language dances in 22 poverty-stricken villages on Wumeng Mountain, it was the first time most villagers had seen such a performance. Sign language dancing involves moving the fingers of one hand across the flattened palm of the other to mimic dancing legs.

Zhu, 11, was born into an impoverished rural village in Bijie, Guizhou. Many impoverished farmers had to leave their hometown due to the lack of arable land in the area. They left to look for better opportunities and higher-paying jobs in prosperous regions.

Yang Youyue, a year older than Zhu, remembers her old home in Guda village. "The roof could hardly keep out the wind and rain as the tiles had fallen off," she said.

Yang moved with her mother to Zhejiang province to escape poverty and get away from her alcoholic father. Since the age of 5, Zhu has dreamed of becoming a dancer after watching a dance competition involving a Chinese troupe on television.

She often imitated dance moves on TV programs, but thanks to pov-



A girl learns painting at a training course for children relocated to Dafang county from poor villages in Bijie.

"I felt like my dream was closer to becoming a reality after moving away from the mountains and into the county."

Zhu Yu, a student living in a residential community in Hezhang county, Bijie, which was built for relocated families

erty alleviation policies, she has been able to pursue her dream.

Zhu's family and other Guda villagers were relocated in June last year to a residential community in Hezhang county, Bijie, about 50 kilometers from their hometown.

The community, equipped with modern infrastructure and facilities, is now home to more than 9,000 impoverished people from remote villages.

Living in the county allows Zhu to receive professional dance training, and she practices hard in her spare time.

She said she dreams of becoming like Yang Liping, a famous Chinese choreographer and dancer.

"I felt like my dream was closer to becoming a reality after moving away from the mountains and into the county," she said.

Zhu said she likes her new home because she only needs to walk about five minutes to get to school every day and can study in a bright, clean classroom. She previously had to walk about an hour and a half from her old home just to get to school.

Her mother runs a small shop in

the community and her father secured a job in the county, giving the family a stable income.

Yang said she has never been happier, because her mother has found work in a wig factory in the community and doesn't need to travel far away anymore. She added that her father has given up alcohol.

Zeng Mao, 26, a volunteer dance instructor for the troupe, said, "moving into the county helps children meet more people and learn new things, which is important when they're growing up."

"Yang was very diffident when she came to the county. She blushed when talking with people, but now she can perform before hundreds of people without having stage fright."

Other young performers in Zhu's troupe, who also once lived in rural areas, have become more confident. They have expressed desires to become dancers, musicians, painters, teachers and flight attendants.

Relocation has been one solution used by China in recent years to help people living in rural areas cast off poverty and have better lives.

In Guizhou, more than 1.8 million impoverished rural residents moved out of the mountains and have been relocated in cities and towns over the past few years. The government provided them with jobs and schools for their children.

In Bijie alone, the central government has invested over 1.9 billion yuan (\$265.7 million) and the provincial government over 14 billion yuan since 2016 to put relocation policies into practice.

Music shop lifts vinyl out of its death spin

Vinyl records, CDs, tapes ... in this digital era, these words are seldom heard, but not for An Peng, who has lived his dream of running a record store in Beijing for the past 20 years.

In An's store, some customers are occupied browsing shelves full of CDs and records while others sit on a sofa playing their vinyl discs on a record player, enjoying the music with their eyes closed.

As the needle of the record player tracks a classical music record, the melody lingers in the 20-square-meter store, immersing the customers in its notes.

In recent years, streaming music online has exploded in popularity and it has become difficult to find a record store like An's.

Cool Music is located in Dongsu Street, an old road in Beijing's downtown area. "People seldom come to buy CDs now. They prefer to open music apps on their phones and listen to music that way," An said.

When An was a child, music was his favorite pastime and it was always his dream to open a record store.

In 1999, then 23-year-old An started his first record store of around 500 square meters, in Beijing's bustling Dongdan district. "It was the hottest time for the record market," An explained.

Over the years, his store has relocated five times.

"To a degree, the size of my store reflects the ups and downs of vinyl records," An said. "There used to be thousands of record stores in Beijing, but now it's only down to a few that still hold on."

With increasing monthly rent, An admitted he was unable to make much money from the business.

"It's all about passion," he replied when asked about the reason for his perseverance. "I feel a sense of gain when sharing beautiful music with others."

Some say album sales are dying as fast as streaming services are rising. US retail giant Best Buy abandoned the sale of the humble CD in its stores last year, according to Billboard magazine.

But there is still a loyal group of people that prefer to enjoy music

To a degree, the size of my store reflects the ups and downs of vinyl records. There used to be thousands of record stores in Beijing, but now it's only down to a few which still hold on."

An Peng, owner of Cool Music record store

the old-fashioned way, and swear by the fidelity of vinyl records over modern music formats, such as MP3s.

"The true fans never left," An said, noting some customers have been shopping at his store for 20 years, even coming from outside the area. "Some foreign clients come to me for classical records."

Ma, a frequent visitor to An's store, has been friends with him for more than 10 years. He goes to the store every month.

"I was just a high school student when I first set foot in Cool Music. Now I come here sometimes with my teenage son," said Ma, adding that his son is also a music fan.

"It feels different finding a record in the shop from shopping online," said Ma. "Here I can talk and exchange views with An and other music fans. Music binds us together."

An said, "Some say vinyl records will eventually die out and be replaced by digital music, but I don't think so." He added that vinyl records offer the purest form of music for people to enjoy.

According to An, the number of people shopping for vinyl is on the rise in his store, with more and more teenagers discovering its appeal.

An is confident vinyl will outlive other audio and video formats, which were superseded by new technologies. "It's video stores that have gone, while record stores are still standing," An said.

XINHUA



An Peng helps a customer find a vinyl record at his store in Beijing. WANG JING / CHINA DAILY

Pioneering prosecutor sets the bar high in pursuit of tough penalties

By ZHOU WENTING in Shanghai
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Shi Jinglan has set an uncompromising standard for herself and her team of prosecutors: If a criminal suspect who should be sentenced to death under the law receives life imprisonment, it means the prosecutors have not done their best.

Shi made her name through her dedication to judicial justice and her pioneering reforms of work procedures, which have dramatically increased the efficiency of prosecutions and been promoted country-wide.

"I'm not dealing with cases but the lives of each and every person involved in these cases," said Shi, 44, who has worked as a prosecutor in Shanghai for 25 years.

Considered as outstanding by her colleagues, Shi has handled more than 1,000 cases, many of them high-profile ones.

One of her most famous cases happened in 2013 when a medical



Shi Jinglan reads case files at her office in Shanghai Pudong New District's People's Procuratorate. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

student from the prestigious Fudan University killed his dorm mate by putting poison in a water dispenser. He was convicted and received the death sentence in 2015.

Another feather in Shi's cap involved a case where a senior manager at a company was caught defrauding investment funds from the public. Shi studied the case files for days and noticed the

suspect's son, who worked for the same company, was also defrauding money and had stolen five times the amount his father had taken.

"I regard fairness and justice as the supreme pursuit in my work and make sure that every judicial case that I deal with can stand the test of law and time," Shi said at a recent conference the city hosted for her to share her experiences.

Zhu Qijia, who works on Shi's team, said that Shi absorbed and scrutinized every fact and piece of evidence relating to a case. "She often says that if we don't dig into the complicated evidence and details of facts, we're likely to miss key clues to crack a case," she said.

Chen Yulin, vice-president of online game developer Shengqu in Shanghai, said when investigating an intellectual property infringement case the company was involved in, Shi went through a staggering 400 gigabytes of data from three mobile phones, three

computers and four servers to collect evidence against the suspects. He said he respected Shi's dedication to her work.

As part of the country's judicial reforms, four pilot prosecution groups were established in Shanghai Pudong New District's People's Procuratorate in March 2017.

Shi became a leader of one of the groups and was given six staff members. But Shi found that procurators were often caught in a mass of trivial administrative and procedural work, and the improper division of labor affected their handling of cases. She revised the work organization manual several times and finally came up with a new job list for members of her group — prosecutors, assistant prosecutors and clerks.

Redefining roles in the team has proved effective in improving the quality and efficiency of case handling. The number of cases handled by her group under the new system has increased by 50 percent, even though more than one-

third of the cases are complex ones covering finance and intellectual property rights.

Such prosecution groups began to be replicated in other regions of the country this year after they were included in the revised Organizations of the People's Prosecutions Departments Code, which became effective at the beginning of this year.

In recognition of her contributions and achievements, Shi became the only deputy from prosecution agencies in Shanghai appointed to the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in late 2017.

In sharing her experience of managing the pilot prosecution groups Shi said, "I felt proud that in Pudong, a place at the forefront of reforms, I was carrying on with the mission of reforms."

Shi added this was the embodiment of Shanghai's role in the country as "a pacesetter in reform and opening-up, and a pioneer of innovation and development."