

# Preparing for the worst

One survivor of the Wenchuan earthquake is teaching young people about disaster preparedness at a learning center in Chengdu. **Li Yingxue** reports.

Ten years ago, on the afternoon of May 12, 18-year-old Dai Guohong was sitting in his classroom when a crack suddenly emerged, splitting open the floor in front of the blackboard.

Dai watched as his teacher fell into the crack, and a few seconds later, he watched his own legs were also sucked into the crack beneath his feet. The crack then shut abruptly, leaving Dai's legs stuck in the middle. Unable to wrestle free, Dai tried to grab the desk and chair near him to make more room as the lights and ceiling began to fall onto him.

This was the Wenchuan earthquake, which destroyed Beichuan High School, in Beichuan county, southwest China's Sichuan province.

After the earthquake, Dai and his classmates initially sang songs and chatted to each other to keep their spirits up, as they lay trapped in the rubble waiting to be rescued. But the room gradually began to fall quiet and Dai was forced to drink his own blood to keep awake.

More than 50 hours after the earthquake, Dai was eventually rescued. He was the only survivor from his class, and his legs had to be amputated.

On May 12, 2018, Dai showed up to attend the opening ceremony of the Disaster Preparedness Learning Center Chengdu in Sichuan province, less than 200 kilometers away from Beichuan.

He is the first volunteer commentator at the center, which he hopes will help more people, especially the young, to be better prepared for disasters.

"I trained the staff at the center in March, and will come back when it's officially open to teach more people about earthquake preparedness," Dai says.

In the wake of the earthquake, it was a long process for Dai to recover physically and mentally. Life education helped him to get back into society, and he started to promote life education in 2016.

"I do experimental life education, so I hope this can be combined with the disaster preparedness experience at the learning center," says Dai.

The Disaster Preparedness Learning Center Chengdu is located at the Jiulidi campus of the Chengdu Youth Palace. The learning center focuses on education about how to survive earthquakes, fires, floods and geological disasters, as well as teaching daily life safety and running a survival park and workshops on these subjects.

The learning center project has been pushed forward by One Foundation, a charity



**Clockwise from top:** Students study how to deal with fire at the opening ceremony of Disaster Preparedness Learning Center Chengdu in Sichuan province. The Disaster Preparedness Learning Center Chengdu provides earthquake experience and survival education to teenagers. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

**“It's also hard to promote an awareness of disasters, unlike the awareness to protect teeth or staying healthy, which people already know about.”**

Jet Li, actor and founder of One Foundation



founded by Chinese actor Jet Li, who also attended the opening ceremony.

"When I heard about the Wenchuan earthquake 10 years ago, I gathered all my 13 full-time staff members and friends and family to go there and provide as much help as we could," Li recalls.

"It was the first time that we had been faced with such a huge disaster, so we were all inexperienced in dealing with that."

Over the past 10 years, Li has continued to promote public welfare, especially to young people.

"In 2008 and 2009, on Sept 1, the first day of the school year, I would tell millions of students that everyone of us should be involved in some form of public service," says Li.

Li places an emphasis on educating young people as they will be key to influencing future generations.

"It's also hard to promote an awareness of disasters, unlike

the awareness to protect teeth or staying healthy, which people already know about," Li says.

"We need both the government and companies, and some charities to work together."

The opening ceremony was also held to mark the launch of the UNDP-China Risk & Resilience Innovation Project Chengdu Base, which will use the learning center as the base for United Nations Development Programme China to carry out a variety of projects.

The UNDP works in about 170 countries and territories to eradicate poverty and protect the environment. They help countries to develop policies, leadership skills, partnerships, institutional capabilities and build resilience in order to achieve sustainable development.

Devanand Ramiah, deputy country director of UNDP China, believes that disasters are not natural — it's the risk that's

natural. He says the base will become a learning hub that connects China with other countries around the world.

"First we want to make sure that people in general, and young people especially, are prepared to how to deal with disasters at a personal level," Ramiah says.

According to Ramiah, since the Wenchuan earthquake, there has been lots of progress on how to deal with disasters, such as using unmanned vehicles and drones.

"China is coming up with lots of innovation technologies. So this center will help to take this technology and its experience in terms of risk reduction and preparedness to other countries," says Ramiah, who says one of the aims of the center is to allow other countries through the UNDP network to bring their disaster response experience to China.

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The winners are awarded a subsidized study trip to Germany next summer. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## Competition for study in Germany

By ZHOU WENTING  
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The first national competition for students majoring in German was held at the Shanghai International Studies University on May 20, with 24 students from eight universities around the country participating.

They went through four sessions — a prepared speech, an impromptu speech, a knowledge contest and a word-guessing game — which saw the SISU team take top prize. The three team members were awarded a subsidized study trip to Germany next summer.

Jiang Feng, Party chief of SISU, the organizer of the competition, says the event was intended to serve as a platform for students to not only enhance their skills in the German language, which is the most widely spoken language in the European Union, but also to expand their way of thinking about globalization.

The other teams entering the competition were from Fudan University, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, Tongji University, Zhejiang University, Nanjing University, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies and Wuhan University.

Each university team assigned one member to participate in the session for the prepared speech on the topic of "The cultural mission of German learners set against the background of globalization".

Ye Yuchen, a sophomore student from Shanghai Jiao Tong University, said in his speech that he understood the mission was to offer more accurate and elegant translations, so that more great works of literature from one language could be better communicated to people speaking another language.

He said he recently read a historical book translated from German to Mandarin, but the translation was too rigid and at times confusing.

"Bad translation may result in the loss of a good book. So if any of us will take up the occupation of translating books in the future, we must avoid these kinds of mistakes," says Ye, who started

learning German at senior high school.

Since then, he has aspired to become an interpreter. He said last year he worked as interpreter for a German writer of children's books during a book fair in Shanghai, and this experience made him more determined than ever to pursue translation as a career.

Ye will spend a semester at the University of Munich starting in the autumn.

"I will take full advantage of the opportunities both in and out of class to tell the teachers and students in Germany what China is like today," he says.

Jiang says the number of people learning German, which is spoken by around 100 million people in Germany, Switzerland, Austria and northern Italy, is obviously smaller than those learning English, but the trend of learning German is growing — and China needs to develop more experts in foreign languages to be able to actively participate in globalization.

"Moreover, Sino-German relations play an important part in the current complex state of international relations, and the German-speaking region is one of the largest trading partners for China. Such a large business and trading volume requires a large number of experts," he says.

Susanne Lada'a from the science affairs department with the Consulate General of Germany in Shanghai, says learning the language is an important step for those working in scientific circles.

"Many technical inventions and ideas are formulated by German-speaking scientists. It's usually better to read their books in the original language, as they often convey deeper meaning than the translated versions," she says.

She says that in Germany the government is pushing to increase the number of people learning Mandarin, especially since China is regarded as a crucial partner for Germany, not only in terms of trade, but also for cultural exchanges and other types of cooperation.

### International Education Column

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