

慈濟

Tzu Chi

Buddhism in Action



**Wise Words for
a Good Life**

**Master Cheng Yen's
*Jing Si Aphorisms***

Cultivating the Heart of a Bodhisattva

Translated by Teresa Chang



A group of young volunteers built a straw house for a 79-year-old man in the town of Nhamatanda, Nhamatanda District, Mozambique.

CHEN BO-XUAN

This world we live in is full of suffering. There is suffering caused by natural and man-made disasters, suffering from old age and illness, and suffering of other kinds too manifold to enumerate. However, everyone has it within themselves to help relieve that suffering. The Buddha encouraged us to feel others' pain as our own and cultivate the compassion of a bodhisattva to alleviate the suffering in the world. He taught us there are three ways of giving through which we can ease the afflictions of others.

The first kind of giving is the giving of material aid. When we learn about people in need, we can give them the things they need, such as daily necessities. We can also donate money to them. Wealthier people can donate more; those who are of modest means can donate less. Even if we make just enough to get by, we can live more frugally to save money to give to others. When everyone gives what they can, many needy people will be able to get help.

The second kind of giving is the giving of fearlessness. When others feel anxious or panicked, we can soothe them to help them regain peace. Some people are so trapped in negative thinking they become very depressed. If we happen to cross paths with them, we can reach out to them with love. I often see our volunteers open their arms to embrace people in distress and provide them with longstanding support until their smiles once again return. They even guide care recipients to help others themselves, thus thoroughly transforming their lives. This is an ultimate form of giving.

The third kind of giving is the giving of the Dharma, that is, the Buddha's teachings. When we've internalized the Dharma and applied it to our daily dealings with people and things, we can share what we have learned and benefited from to guide people out of their problems and help them open their hearts. Despite everything that we have to go through in life, despite the sorrow and afflictions that seem an inevitable part of life, as long as we have a good understanding of the Dharma, we will be able to approach suffering with equanimity and rise above it.

The Buddha taught us to purify our hearts and put our love into action. Seeing how Tzu Chi vol-

unteers are living out his teachings brings me joy. Just the other day, some members of the Tzu Chi International Medical Association (TIMA) came to the Jing Si Abode to report on the free clinic events they had just carried out in Laos. They witnessed the lack of medical resources in the country, and they all hoped that Tzu Chi could do more for the underserved people there.

These TIMA members, as is typical with our volunteers, used their own time and money to travel to Laos for this medical mission. During the trip, they donated hospital beds and IV drip stands to a local hospital, and they treated people afflicted with illness. When they encountered anxious or worried patients, they gently comforted them to allay their fears. Appreciative of their help, local people gave them sincere, heartfelt thanks. It was very heart-warming indeed.

Our volunteers in Mozambique give of themselves with the same loving spirit. Since Cyclone Idai devastated the country in March this year, they have held many aid distributions to help those affected. They have truly taken to heart the Buddha's teachings to reach out to the needy. Their work after the cyclone inspired many young people to join their ranks. These young people have, for example, helped build straw houses for older, disadvantaged people with building materials distributed by Tzu Chi. They said that in the past they did not know what love is but now they do and so they cheerfully and willingly do what they can to help others.

Guided by the Buddha's wisdom, our volunteers practice the three kinds of giving: They donate money and material aid, offer emotional support, and share the Dharma with those who are troubled and afflicted. By giving of themselves like this, they are lighting candles in the dark. From one lit candle, many more will come to be lit. Thousands of candles can be lit from that first candle and yet the flame of that first candle is not diminished. With more candles lit, more darkness will be dispelled. I thank everyone who gives their love, and I hope all underserved people in the world have homes to live in and have their educational and medical needs served by a caring society. ❀

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Bimonthly

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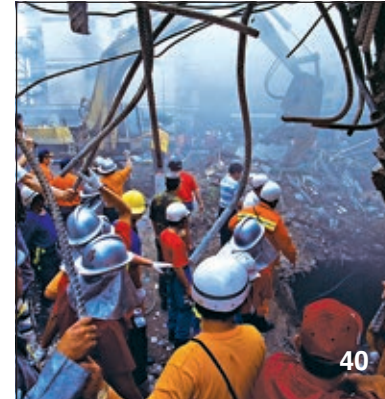
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The *Tzu Chi Bimonthly* welcomes contributions of personal experiences or reports of Tzu Chi activities. We also welcome letters to the editor containing personal comments or opinions on matters of interest in the Tzu Chi world. We reserve the right to edit the letters for purposes of space, time or clarity. Letters should include the writer's name, address and telephone number.

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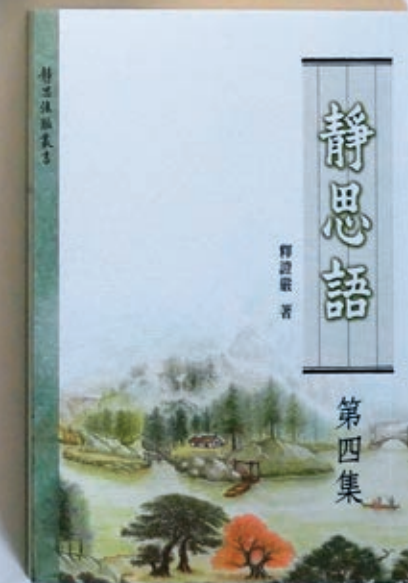
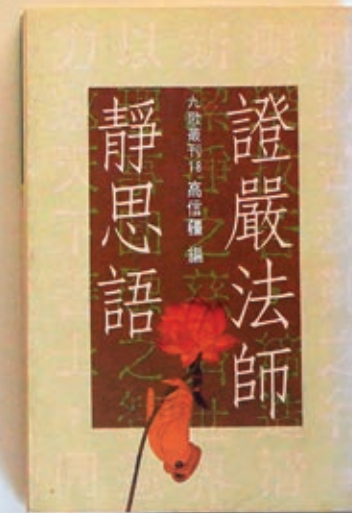
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Wise Words for a Good Life

Three Decades of *Jing Si* Aphorisms

Jing Si Aphorisms is a book that encapsulates the essence of Dharma Master Cheng Yen's teachings. Now comprised of five volumes and available in 18 languages, it celebrates its 30th birthday this year. Over the last three decades, the book has shed light on many issues in life for countless people, helping them lead more peaceful and happier lives.



Master Cheng Yen's *Jing Si Aphorisms* was first published in 1989 to be given as a gift book to guests attending the grand opening ceremony of the Tzu Chi College of Nursing. It became an instant bestseller when it was later published for purchase. Over the years, its popularity has held strong. The fifth volume of the book came out in October 2019.

HSIAO YIU-HWA

By the writing team for *The Story of Tzu Chi*, Tzu Chi Periodicals Department
Abridged and translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

When the grand opening ceremony for the Tzu Chi College of Nursing took place on September 17, 1989, every guest received a gift book, courtesy of Gary Ho (何國慶), a Tzu Chi volunteer and convener of the ceremony. The book was *Jing Si Aphorisms* by Dharma Master Cheng Yen. Jing Si means “quiet contemplation,” and the book later became the first Tzu Chi book published for sale to the general public. Launched in November 1989, it made the list of Taiwan’s top ten bestsellers of 1990.

The main editor of the book was Kao Hsin-chiang (高信疆), a veteran in print media and a well-known editor in his day. He first met Master Cheng Yen in March 1989. The book was published a mere six months later and has been a popular publication ever since. It has been translated into nearly 20 languages and distributed around the world.

Gems in simple, plain language

Kao was the chairman of *China Times Express* when he was enlisted by his good friend Gary Ho to help put together a book of Master Cheng Yen’s

teachings. Since Kao didn’t know much about Tzu Chi, Ho invited him to a gathering of Tzu Chi honorary board members to understand the group better. Kao had gone straight to the Tzu Chi event from work that day, March 4, 1989. He didn’t know what to expect when he walked into the Shih Chien Hall on Yanping South Road in Taipei.

At the entrance to the event, he was greeted by a few smiling, cheongsam-clad women from whom he received two warm steamed buns. There was quite a crowd inside the venue. Several women rose to give up their seats to him. One of them moved over to sit on a staired aisle. At her insistence, Kao took her seat.

Kao had always been a trailblazer in his field, starting off as a reporter before moving up to editor-in-chief and finally chairman of a major newspaper. As a journalist, he was an astute observer and commentator, and he worked hard to provide the public with an informed perspective on important social issues. He thought he was fully informed on what was going on in society, but as the event progressed that day, he was astonished to find that he was unaware of the large amount of philanthropic work Tzu Chi had carried out over the previous two decades.

Two days later, he and Gary Ho visited Master Cheng Yen, who happened to be in Taipei at the time on one of her regular trips around Taiwan.

Kao listened to the Master talk about her life—about how, as a child, she had had to escape air raids during World War II; how she lived through her adopted father’s sudden passing; how she harvested rice in the countryside of Fengyuan, central Taiwan; and how she ultimately decided to leave home to embark on a search for life’s truths.

What the Master said that day changed what Kao used to think about monks and nuns—that they lived an otherworldly life and were oblivious to worldly affairs. The Master’s talk did not contain any abstruse, obscure teaching; Kao could feel that she was unassuming, sincere,



On December 13, 1989, Kao Hsin-chiang (fourth from right) and Gary Ho (first from right) accompanied writer Liu Binyan (third from left) on a visit to Master Cheng Yen at the Jing Si Abode. Kao arranged visits to Tzu Chi by many people in the media and cultural circles after he met with the Master.

COURTESY OF TZU CHI HUALIEN HEADQUARTERS

down-to-earth, and very approachable. Though Kao was not affiliated with any religion, the stories she told brought sparks to his eyes. She reminded him of a character in Dostoevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov*: Father Zosima, an elder of the Orthodox Church.

When Zosima was young and an officer in the army, he did a reckless thing. He came to his senses soon afterwards and regretted it, but the event prompted him to seek a discharge from the army and join a monastery. Having turned over a new leaf, he told people around him that everything in nature—the clear sky, the pure air, the tender grass, and so on—were gifts from God and that life was heaven. He later became famous for his saint-like status, and people went to him from all parts of Russia to seek his guidance and blessing. After he passed away, some of his conversations with visitors and others were preserved in writing, his wisdom captured in words.

Dostoevsky’s literary character was fictional, but Kao seemed to find a true and veritable counterpart to Zosima in Master Cheng Yen. “Such wise people do indeed exist in this world,” he thought. After that, he invited and got many of his friends in the media and cultural circles to visit Tzu Chi, including writers Liu Binyan (劉賓雁), Su Xiaokang (蘇曉康), Hualing Nieh Engle (聶華苓), Leo Ou-fan Lee (李歐梵), Bo Yang (柏楊), and historian Te-kong Tong (唐德剛). In addition, at Kao’s recommendation, major Taiwanese news outlets including the *Central Daily News*, *United Daily News*, and *Liberty Times* sent people to the Tzu Chi headquarters in Hualien, eastern Taiwan, to report on the foundation.

Among the latter group, Hong Su-zhen (洪素貞) and two colleagues from the *Central Daily News* visited Tzu Chi on April 9, 1989, for an interview with Master Cheng Yen. Hong’s article about the Master and Tzu Chi (co-written with Wu Yue-hui [吳月蕙]) was published in the April 19 and 20 editions of the newspaper.

In the style of *Analects*

Gary Ho loved reading, and he knew that the Master’s words were very wise. He believed that if the essence of her teachings could be distilled and put together in a book, many people would surely

be interested in reading it. Kao's wife, Ke Yuan-xin (柯元馨), saw eye to eye with Ho.

When Kao's first meeting with the Master concluded, the Master gave him several books compiled from her Dharma talks. Ke Yuan-xin read those books and had nothing but praise for the content. Ke was a manager of a publishing house and had a keen eye for good publication material. She suggested re-editing the contents of those books for a new publication.

In early May that year, about two months after Kao had met with the Master, he phoned Hong Su-zhen, who had just quit her job at the *Central Daily News*, and invited her to "do something together for Tzu Chi." Kao told her about his idea of publishing a book of sayings by Master Cheng Yen.

Having just finished her article on Tzu Chi, Hong still retained a lot of good feelings for the organization, and since she was between jobs, she said "yes" to Kao's invitation. A major of Chinese literature, she suggested a format like that of Confucius' *Analects*. Kao endorsed that idea, and so they set about collecting material for the book.

Gary Ho arranged several meetings in which 19 Tzu Chi volunteers, who were also team leaders, shared their favorite sayings by Master Cheng Yen. Later, each of their teams was asked to provide five sayings by the Master. At the same time, Hong interviewed some senior Tzu Chi volunteers and asked them to share what they had learned personally from the Master and that they felt had really benefited them.

Hong also spent a week at the Jing Si Abode, the convent established by the Master. The Abode also served as the Tzu Chi headquarters. Hong read through transcripts of the Master's Dharma talks as well as journals written by the Master's followers. The journals recorded what the Master's followers had seen and heard when they were around her. Eventually, Hong was able to select more than a thousand items from all she had collected for further refinement.

Then came Kao's turn to put his editing skills to good use. This was before the era of personal computers, so he cut the selected material into small strips, each strip containing one aphorism. Then he spent three days squatting on the floor, sorting and classifying the strips of paper. Ho personally saw him doing this and was impressed by his dedication and effort.

The completed book was composed of two parts. In the first part, the Master addressed topics including time, kindness and compassion, greed

and desire, ethical refinement and spiritual cultivation. The second part was presented in the context of questions and answers. For this part, Kao and his wife visited the Master at the Jing Si Abode and sought her opinions and advice on various issues in life. This part was itself composed of two sections. One was titled: "Human Affairs," which was organized into topics on tolerance and gentleness, duty and responsibility, communication, mother- and daughter-in-law relationships, and love. The other section was titled "Religion," and contained topics on faith, the practice of Buddhism, spiritual merits, the karmic law of cause and effect, and similar topics.

Ho and Kao named the book *Jing Si Aphorisms*. Ho paid for the printing of 20,000 copies, which were given as gifts to guests attending the grand opening ceremony for the Tzu Chi College of Nursing. The book was so popular that Ho printed an additional 20,000 copies to give away.

Kao and Ho agreed that the book should be made available to the general public, instead of just to Tzu Chi volunteers and donating members. They subsequently met Wang Tuan-cheng (王端正), then the editor-in-chief of the *Central Daily News* and who later became a vice president of the Tzu Chi Foundation. The three discussed the publication of the book for sale.

In November 1989, *Jing Si Aphorisms* was launched by the Chiu Ko Publishing Company, a highly regarded publishing house in Taiwan. In just a week, 20,000 copies were sold and more had to be printed. It became the number one bestselling book in more than 30 bookstores in Taiwan. It experienced 30 printings within two short months, with 60,000 copies circulating.

Two years earlier, in 1987, martial law had been lifted in Taiwan. Taiwan's economy boomed in the immediate following years, and the stock and housing markets reached an all time high before the economic bubble eventually burst. A restless, agitated atmosphere permeated society. *Jing Si Aphorisms* came out at a good time, answering the needs of people who needed guidance for their unsettled minds.

A guide to life

The book sold so well that when Tsai Wen-fu (蔡文甫), the founder of Chiu Ko Publishing, met Master Cheng Yen not long after the book was launched, he was able to hand over a large royalty payment to her. Instead of using the money on herself, the Master decided to share it with others. It thus became a tradition for her to give out *hong-*



Master Cheng Yen (above) distributes hong-baos every year to attendees of Tzu Chi year-end blessing ceremonies.

HUANG JIN-YI

The money for making these hong-baos comes from the royalties of the Master's books, including *Jing Si Aphorisms*. The 1992 (far right) and 2018 (right) versions of hong-baos.

PHOTOS BY HSIAO YIU-HWA





A Jing Si aphorism was posted in a shop with the permission of a store owner in Taoyuan, northern Taiwan. The aphorism says: “One who leads a content life with the least desire is the wealthiest.” Volunteers in Wenshan District, Taipei, first started visiting stores in 2004 to ask shop owners’ permission to post Jing Si aphorisms on their premises. This campaign has since spread all over Taiwan and even abroad.

XIE JIA-CHENG

baos (small, artistically designed red packets) every year to attendees of Tzu Chi year-end blessing ceremonies; the money for making these hong-baos comes from royalties of her books. (More of her books were published for sale after the publication of *Jing Si Aphorisms*.)

On April 15, 1990, five months after *Jing Si Aphorisms* was released, the Master mentioned during a gathering of Tzu Chi volunteers that she had received a letter the day before from a young man. The man told her in the letter that though they had never met, he was full of gratitude to her, because her *Jing Si Aphorisms* had saved him from committing a big crime.

One day, the author of the letter was about to rob a bank when he happened to see a copy of *Jing*

Si Aphorisms on a motor scooter parked near the bank. He picked the book up and, thumbing through it, saw this sentence: “If you are doing good deeds, count me in; if you are doing evil, count me out.” It was like a wake-up call to him, and he came to his senses immediately. The man told the Master if he hadn’t seen that book that day, “instead of writing to you now, I might have been thrown in jail.”

The man went on to say that he had been born into a destitute family and that life was hard for him growing up. Nevertheless, he applied himself to his schoolwork, and eventually he finished college. After finishing his compulsory military service, he worked hard at his job—only to be dealt another hard hand by life. He cosigned a loan for a friend, and then the friend ran off, landing him with a debt of 4,500,000 NT dollars (US\$150,000). His creditors visited him at home every day demanding payment. Not knowing what else to do, he decided to rob a bank. Fortunately, he stumbled upon that copy of *Jing Si Aphorisms* and reined himself in at the last moment.

The Master was greatly comforted by the letter, which had no return address. She lauded the amazing karmic affinities that led to the man’s

encounter with the book. “Otherwise the consequences would have been unimaginable,” she remarked. “I give my best wishes to this anonymous young man. I hope he has a bright future ahead of him.”

There are countless other examples of how *Jing Si Aphorisms* has helped and “saved” people.

One day, a man walked into the Tzu Chi Taipei office, saying that he wanted to buy 20 copies of *Jing Si Aphorisms*. He explained that he bought 20 copies of the book from time to time to give away. Since it was hard to obtain so many copies at one time in a bookstore, he had come straight to the office to make the purchase.

Why did he buy and give away so many copies of the book? He said that whenever he saw a newspaper ad run by someone trying to find his runaway wife, he would phone that person and ask if he had children. If he did, he would tell him to take good care of them and send him a copy of *Jing Si Aphorisms*.

A Jing Si aphorism inscribed on a wooden plaque hangs on a corridor wall in Sheliiao Junior High School in Nantou, central Taiwan. The aphorism says: “To let go is actually to receive. Without letting go, you can’t let in.” Over 600 schools in central Taiwan have put up Jing Si aphorisms on their campuses.

HUANG XIAO-ZHE



As it turned out, the man had once put a similar ad in the newspaper. His marriage had broken up because he was unfaithful to his wife. After his mistress moved in with him, instead of treating her nicely, he would physically abuse her. Eventually, his mistress left him, taking away his younger daughter with her. He was left to take care of his older daughter alone. It was very hard to look after the young one while holding down a job at the same time. The man’s heart was full of hatred and he suffered a lot.

Just at that time, a neighbor gave him a copy of *Jing Si Aphorisms*. He became more peaceful after he read the book, and he sought help from Tzu Chi volunteers. With their guidance, he began to live his life differently. “My family was saved by *Jing Si Aphorisms*!” he declared. That’s how he began buying copies of the book to give to people who might be experiencing similar circumstances to his.

Back then, every issue of the semi-monthly *Tzu Chi Companion* carried a Jing Si aphorism on its front page. The wise, concise sayings captured the attention of many readers. People working in the field of education especially liked to use the maxims as material for character building.

Lin Shen (林慎), a Tzu Chi volunteer who taught school in Taipei, was one of those people. She said she once received a phone call from a par-

ent, thanking her for sharing Jing Si aphorisms in school. The parent said that she used to fight with her husband, and that they would sometimes end up not talking to each other for one or two months at a time. She was overbearing, she said, and she always insisted that her family do what she told them to. Her imperiousness drove her family away, which in turn brought her a lot of pain.

One day, her daughter began to show her Jing Si aphorisms she had copied down in school, aphorisms including “The more you forgive others, the more blessings you create for yourself” and “Kind words are like lotus flowers blooming out from your mouth; bad words are like poisonous

A prison inmate in Taichung, central Taiwan, writes down his thoughts after attending a study group session on Jing Si aphorisms led by Tzu Chi volunteers. Volunteers visit prisons in various places in Taiwan to extend their care to inmates and share positive, inspirational messages.

CHEN QUN-CHENG

snakes hissing out from your lips.” She took those words to heart and began to treat her children in a more encouraging way. She also stopped constantly finding fault in her husband. Soon the atmosphere in her home underwent a huge transformation, and that led to her phone call to the teacher.

18 languages and distributed world-wide

Gary Ho, who helped bring the book into being, also felt its power. One time he was negotiating a business deal with a client in his office when they began to butt heads. As their opinions clashed, they both bristled and raised their voices. Just then the phone rang. When Ho had taken care of the phone call and returned to his seat, he perceived a marked change in the client. The client told Ho he had leafed through a copy of *Jing Si Aphorisms* on his desk while he was waiting and saw this sentence: “Remain soft-spoken and forgiving, even when reason is on your side.” Those words immediately smoothed his ruffled feathers

The Bible can often be seen in hotel rooms. *Jing Si Aphorisms* started making its appearance in hotel rooms in Taiwan as well in 2005. Now over 1,400 hotels in Taiwan and abroad house the book in their rooms.

WU QUN-FANG



and quenched his anger. Ho regained his calm too, and the two of them were able to amicably work out a deal.

Hong Su-zhen, who helped compile and edit *Jing Si Aphorisms*, also felt the profound inspirational power of the Master’s words, and how they can soothe people’s minds and awaken kindness in them. “Religion is no longer remote from life,” Hong said. “The values of real-life bodhisattvas have been established, and humanized Buddhism put into practice.” Hong later became a disciple of the Master.

Kao wrote in his editor’s words for the book that although the Master rarely says anything astonishing, her words are often like a wake-up call. “She doesn’t use obscure classical allusions or florid language, and her wisdom can be seen in the smallest, most unremarkable places.” He believes that her teachings are a good guide to life, and that everyone can apply and benefit from them in their daily life.

Wang Tuan-cheng also took part in editing *Jing Si Aphorisms*. In his eyes, the greatest truths are often those most simply stated. “*Jing Si Aphorisms* doesn’t contain any difficult, convoluted phrasing, but every sentence inspires. It is devoid of esoteric Buddhist terminology, but every word is alive with the Buddha’s spirit,” he said.

Gary Ho still remembers that when he met Kao and Wang to discuss the publication of the book for sale, he told them he believed the book would sell very well—500,000 to a million copies according to his estimate. Kao and Wang burst out laughing upon hearing his prediction. “Brother Ho,

that’s impossible! In Taiwan’s publishing industry, even just 20,000 copies make a book a bestseller.”

Actual sales figures since then have proved Ho’s prediction correct. *Jing Si Aphorisms* sold 200,000 copies in just a year, ten times the prediction of print media veterans Kao and Wang.

Thanks to Kao, a popular, good book was brought into existence. Because of him, many people in the media and cultural circles began to notice Tzu Chi. Ho believed that “Taiwan discovered Tzu Chi” in the year Kao connected with the organization.

Jing Si Aphorisms has since been translated into 18 languages and has sold over 7,000,000 copies. Its fifth volume was launched in October this year. Members of the Tzu Chi Teachers Association have designed teaching materials from the aphorisms to help volunteers in Taiwan and other countries share them with students in school, and through the students the wise sayings have been brought into many families. Volunteers have also visited stores and, with the shop owners’ permission, have posted Jing Si aphorisms on their premises to allow the good messages to reach more people.

Over the past 30 years, *Jing Si Aphorisms* has had a profound positive influence on many people. “I hope that everyone who reads this book can attain freedom of the mind,” said Master Cheng Yen, expressing her hope for the book when it was published. Gems of wisdom lie within the pages of the book, waiting for you to discover. ❀



Jing Si Aphorisms: About the Cultivation of Character

It is easy to reflect on major mistakes and hard to eliminate small bad habits.

To a beautiful heart, everything appears beautiful.

To be humble is to shrink your ego until you are small enough to enter another's eyes and reside in their heart and mind.



Jing Si Aphorisms: About Family

We should care for all living beings with a mother’s love and educate our children with a bodhisattva’s wisdom.

A married couple should compete on who is more loving, not on who is more feared.

The family is an everlasting school; parents are lifetime teachers.

Jing Si Aphorisms: About Action and Implementation

Everything will appear difficult if we do not take action. Action transforms even the driest land into an oasis.

A blessing is something to be created, not wished for.

One must focus on each step one takes; stumbling is likelier if one looks too far.



Three Years On

After the 2016 Ecuador Earthquake

By Tina Tuan

Translated by George Chen

Soon after a massive earthquake struck Ecuador in April 2016, Tzu Chi volunteers arrived in the country to provide support. Their presence has been constant there over the last three years. Along the way, volunteers have witnessed how survivors regained their footing with dignity after the disaster. This is a tale of people of different religions working together with mutual trust to rebuild.



TINA TUAN

At the opening ceremony of the new church in Canoa, Ecuador, Martin Kuo introduces attendees to a commemorative marble plaque that records how Tzu Chi came to undertake the church reconstruction project.

Ecuador is located in northwestern South America, bordered by Colombia to the north, Peru on the east and south, and the Pacific Ocean on the west. It's aptly named: Ecuador means "equator" in Spanish, and it received its name because the equator runs through it.

On April 16, 2016, a 7.8-magnitude earthquake pummeled Ecuador's Manabi Province, on the Pacific coast. It caused widespread damage in cities including Manta, Portoviejo, Pedernales, Canoa, and Jama. More than 600 people were killed and more than 10,000 injured in the disaster.

Tzu Chi volunteer Martin Kuo (葛濟覺), of the United States, led a nine-member disaster assessment team to Ecuador soon after the temblor struck. "The disaster area covered a long stretch," he recalled. "We spent an average of seven to eight hours per day travelling by car. We had no time to be tired. Sleep was a distant second priority to helping the earthquake victims."

Chaos reigned after the disaster, making contact with government officials extremely difficult. Thankfully, tremendous support came from Florencia Hsieh (謝妙宏), then Taiwan's representative at the Taipei Commercial Office in Ecuador, and Armando Cheng (鄭正勇), then political counselor at the office. With their help, a meeting was arranged with Jorge Zambrano, the mayor of Manta at the time. However, the Tzu Chi team was granted only five minutes for the meeting!

In life, everything is due to karmic affinities, and karmic affinities can be unexpected and surprising. "When I started talking with the mayor," Kuo recalled, "I immediately felt a strong affinity with him. What was to be a five-minute meeting stretched to more than an hour." Kuo was able to fully convey to the mayor what Tzu Chi hoped to do in Ecuador and what governmental support they would need. "The meeting not only allowed us to share Tzu Chi's philosophy with the mayor," Kuo continued, "but also marked the first step of Tzu Chi's disaster relief mission in Ecuador."

Eyes devoid of hope

The Tzu Chi team found during their site visits that there were two types of temporary shelters for earthquake victims: large government-run ones offering an adequate supply of necessities, and private ones scattered across the cities that had been affected by the quake. Compassionate residents from Quito, the national capital, and Guayaquil, Ecuador's largest city—areas that were not impacted by the temblor—drove all the way from their cities to donate needed items to the shelters.

The government later closed the private shelters and transferred residents there to the government shelters to better manage earthquake relief resources. As a result, each shelter had to accommodate huge populations of several thousand people. Shelter residents had tents to live in and were sufficiently provided with daily subsistence, but their eyes looked vacant and devoid of hope. They did not seem to have any motivation to rebuild their homes.

When Master Cheng Yen was briefed about the situation, she immediately instructed the Tzu Chi team to start a work-relief program in quake-affected zones. The foundation had first launched such a program in the Philippines in the aftermath of Typhoon Ketsana in 2009, and it became a successful disaster relief model for Tzu Chi. In such a program, money that is meant to be given to disaster victims is turned into wages for them to clean up their own communities. As residents work, they regain a sense of purpose. They realize that they need not wait passively in their shelters for help to come but can instead rely on their own strength to put their communities back in order. An added and appreciated benefit is that they get paid at the same time.

The cash-for-work program is based on the principle of empathy. It addresses disaster victims' needs by turning relief hand-outs into pay, thus instilling in them a sense of dignity and hope. This model of disaster relief was used again in the Philippines after Typhoon Haiyan hit the nation in November 2013. It was so suc-



A beautiful coastal area in Pedernales, Ecuador, strewn with rubble and debris left by a powerful earthquake that hit Ecuador in April 2016

COURTESY OF TZU CHI HUALIEN HEADQUARTERS

→Participants of a Tzu Chi cash-for-work clean-up program in Pedernales pose with Tzu Chi volunteers.

↓ Cash-for-work program participants in Pedernales donate money into a Tzu Chi coin bank to help support the foundation's charity work.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF TZU CHI HUALIEN HEADQUARTERS



cessful that it won the attention of and was reported in the *Wall Street Journal*.

Martin Kuo had been on a relief team to the Philippines in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan and had helped out in the cash-for-work clean-up program Tzu Chi had organized there. Relying on that hands-on experience, he set out to organize such a program in Ecuador as soon as he received the Master's instructions. A work-relief program was launched on May 6, 2016, starting in the city of Portoviejo.

First income since the disaster

"Everyone was suspicious of us at first," Kuo said. "They wondered why a group of foreigners would come all the way to Ecuador to offer them such a work opportunity." As a result of their suspicions, only 120 Portoviejo residents turned up on the first day of the program. Tzu Chi volunteers divided them into teams of ten to clean up areas designated by the city government—mainly streets near collapsed buildings.

At the end of that day, Tzu Chi volunteers, true to their word, paid each participant US\$15 for their work. These were good wages, considering the average daily wage in Ecuador was US\$12. Word of mouth quickly spread that the foreigners were really living up to their word. After that, the number of people signing up for the program increased dramatically, spiking to over a thousand each day.

After Portoviejo, Tzu Chi volunteers moved north along the coast to Manta, Canoa, and then to Pedernales to implement the program. Eventually, the local media took notice and reported on the project. People all over the country learned of the program this way. In the last few days in Pedernales, the daily number of participants was pushing 3,000!

Each day, before participants set out to work, volunteers shared with them the early history of Tzu Chi, about how the foundation had started in Taiwan in 1966 with 30 housewives each saving a little money a day in bamboo coin banks to help the needy. From such humble beginnings, Tzu Chi grew to a global charity organization that has provided aid to nearly a hundred countries around the world. By sharing this story, the volunteers hoped to encourage everyone not to underestimate themselves. When everyone harbors good thoughts and performs good deeds every day, the power created will be limitless.

Jenyffer Ruiz, an Ecuadorian, translated the volunteers' messages into Spanish during the

sharing sessions, and added her rally cry to motivate the cleaning teams: "Let's fight together for our city [Luchemos juntos por nuestra ciudad]! Go! Go! Go!"

"Volunteering for Tzu Chi can stimulate your potential," Kuo declared. "Although working onsite in the disaster zones is exhausting, your mind is so focused on helping the victims that instead of wanting to rest, you want to be transformed into the Thousand-Hand Guan Yin Bodhisattva so that you can do more." Kuo was greatly comforted when he saw smiles returning to quake survivors' faces and hope lighting up their eyes after they participated in the program. "Tzu Chi helped them realize that although they were receiving help now, they would eventually be back on their feet." Many participants even donated to Tzu Chi. Though the amounts they could give were not much, they felt proud of themselves for being able to contribute what they could.

Participants broke into bright smiles when they received their pay after a day's work. For many, this was their first income since the quake. Their spirits lifted when they saw the streets, once strewn with debris, become clean again. They regained hope when they saw the possibility of rebuilding their communities and homes. Many indicated that they would use the money they had received from the cash-for-work program to repair their houses, so that they could leave the temporary shelters sooner and move back to their own homes.

Repaying kindness with kindness

Jama, one of the coastal cities hit hard by the earthquake, is located between Canoa and Pedernales. When its mayor, Angel Rojas Cevallos, learned about Tzu Chi's work-relief program from the media, he felt certain that the group would eventually reach his town. After several weeks of anxious waiting, however, there was still no sign of the Tzu Chi volunteers. When he learned that the Tzu Chi team had reached Pedernales, farther north than Jama, he hurried over there to meet the team and asked if Jama could be included in the program too.

Volunteers explained to the mayor that they were wrapping up the program and that the relief funds they had at their disposal were almost depleted. Disappointed, the mayor broke into tears. Seeing how sad he was, the volunteers teared up too. Not wanting to let him down, Martin Kuo eventually worked out a way and scraped together US\$15,000 to help Jama residents. But that amount was only enough to pay



Boris Garcia (middle) explains the progress of the church reconstruction project in Canoa to Tzu Chi volunteers.

YE JIN-HONG

for 1,000 shifts—what if more people showed up? Mayor Cevallos responded, much to everyone's surprise: "Don't worry. I will pay the extra costs."

So, just like that, the Tzu Chi team expanded their program to include Jama. In the end, 1,280 people turned up, 280 people over what Tzu Chi could pay. Keeping his promise, the mayor used US\$4,200 from his own pocket and defrayed the extra costs. However, when the team reported what had happened to Master Cheng Yen, she asked Kuo to immediately reimburse the money to the mayor.

By then, the team was already in Canoa, a five-hour drive from Jama, but Kuo and Jenyffer Ruiz immediately decided to head back to Jama to return the money. Night had fallen and road conditions were not good. On their way, the bottom of their car scraped against some rocks and the chassis caught fire. Neither Kuo nor Ruiz was aware of it until a driver from the opposite lane shouted for them to stop. They were at a sharp

bend in the road at the time, which was a dangerous place to stop, but they had no choice. Fortunately, a driver of a big vehicle parked at the bend to temporarily stop the flow of traffic and even used his fire extinguisher to help douse the fire. People in another car also came out and helped push their car to a safer spot for it to be towed away.

"It must have been the bodhisattvas keeping an eye on us," Kuo said. "At the most critical moment, a group of kind-hearted Ecuadorians came forward to help us. But just as quickly as they had appeared, they were gone. We didn't even have the time to ask their names. It was truly incredible!"

Within a month, Tzu Chi had completed 34 work-relief sessions and paid out 34,000 daily wages. Volunteers from the United States, Taiwan, Paraguay, the Dominican Republic, Brazil, and Argentina worked in relay teams to provide their support. When some volunteers had to go home, others came to take their places, so that there was always enough manpower on the frontline to pull off this mission. In addition to the cash-for-work project, volunteers also

organized free clinics and distributions of food for babies and young children, hygiene items, and emergency cash.

Gradually, with everyone working together, the disaster areas were cleaned up and returned to normalcy.

A super team that never said no

A year after the earthquake, another disaster hit Ecuador. Heavy rains in April 2017 caused severe flooding in three provinces in the country, affecting 120,000 residents.

The earthquake a year before had connected a group of local people with Tzu Chi. Jenyffer Ruiz was one of them. She was a victim of the April 2017 flooding too. Despite her own situation, she was more concerned about the plight of other victims than she was with herself. She assessed damage in disaster areas and sent the information she had gathered to the Tzu Chi headquarters in Hualien, Taiwan, and to Martin Kuo, who happened to be in Hualien attending a board of directors meeting.

The Tzu Chi headquarters decided to launch flood relief work in Ecuador. Volunteers from Argentina, Paraguay, the United States, Brazil, Canada, Guatemala, and the Dominican Republic traveled to Ecuador and joined local volunteers in initiating another cash-for-work clean-up project in Santa Ana and Portoviejo. Participants put in a total of 18,000 shifts to clear away mud and debris left behind by the floods. Tzu Chi also distributed emergency cash to flood victims in the two places, benefiting nearly 2,100 households.

U.S. Tzu Chi volunteers including Martin Kuo, George Chang (張濟舵), Debbie Chen (林慮璐), and Simon Shyong (熊士民) had accumulated a lot of international disaster relief experience by participating in Tzu Chi work. After the April 16, 2016, earthquake and the April 2017 flooding, they traveled frequently between the U.S.A. and Ecuador to help with the foundation's relief operations there.

In the meantime, they had to tend to other Tzu Chi work too. Though their average age is over 60, at a simple request from the Master, they will drop everything at hand and travel to a disaster area to support Tzu Chi work. Exchanging plane tickets, losing their luggage, and failing to bring enough changes of clothes are all common occurrences for them. They are fully dedicated to their volunteer work, their hearts and minds focused on relieving the suffering of other people. It was because of the selfless

service of this super team that Tzu Chi's spirit of Great Love could grow in Ecuador.

From a successful businessman to a volunteer

The region that is now Ecuador was part of the Inca Empire before the Spanish conquered the area in the 16th century and established a colony. Ecuador gained independence from Spain in the early 19th century. The Spaniards left, but the Catholic faith they had brought to Ecuador remained and flourished. Now, more than 80 percent of Ecuadorians are Catholics.

When Tzu Chi volunteers were assessing damage in Canoa after the April 2016 temblor, they learned that the quake had destroyed a Catholic church in the town. The church was an important spiritual center for the townspeople. When Master Cheng Yen learned about it, she instructed Tzu Chi volunteers to rebuild this religious center for the town.

Canoa means "canoe" in Spanish. The new church, built on the same site as the old one, is shaped like a boat. Men in the town were hired as workers during construction, and women were employed to cook vegetarian food for the workers. Townspeople gained employment and the dignity of bringing in money for their families while the religious center of their town was being rebuilt.

At the new church's opening ceremony, which drew roughly 700 people, Bishop Eduardo José Castillo Pino, other members of the clergy, and local representatives came up on stage one after another to express their gratitude to Tzu Chi. Some residents brought hand-made gifts for the Tzu Chi volunteers attending the ceremony and others performed songs and dances to celebrate the occasion. Everyone sang the Spanish version of the Tzu Chi song "One family" for the finale.

Boris Garcia, the contractor of the church reconstruction project, was filled with emotion at the happy celebration. He was once away from his home country for seven years while working as a fireman for the U.S. Special Forces. He served on the frontline with the U.S. military, putting out fires caused by shootings and bomb blasts. He was in Afghanistan for three years, where he saw much death. After that, he decided to return to his hometown to be with his family. He wanted to spend as much time as he could with them.

Garcia learned about Tzu Chi through a relative who worked in the Manta city government. Garcia's relative had provided assistance to Tzu Chi volunteers when they were carrying out a



Attendees of the inauguration ceremony of the new church in Canoa sing the Spanish version of the Tzu Chi song “One Family.”

TINA TUAN

cash-for-work project in the city. Garcia began helping maintain order at work-relief sites after he came to know Tzu Chi. “I learned everything I knew about the Tzu Chi philosophy and values from Martin [Kuo],” Garcia said. “In every activity, he was always the first to arrive and the last to leave. He took every instruction of Master Cheng

Yen to heart and made sure he fulfilled them. And he took good care of every volunteer. Jenyffer and I were the first persons in Ecuador to join Tzu Chi, and Martin practically lavished care on us.” He added that Kuo was really trying his very best to help people in his country. He saw him shedding tears many times in the disaster areas—he was feeling sad because he could not help every person in need.

After ground was broken for Tzu Chi’s church reconstruction project in Canoa, almost no prog-

ress was made for a year. Some local residents sarcastically remarked that Tzu Chi was all talk and no action. Garcia was saddened by their response. He was also upset to see Kuo experiencing health issues due to the immense pressure he was under.

In November 2017, Garcia made a trip to the Tzu Chi headquarters in Taiwan and personally learned how much the Master cared about the church project. When he returned to Ecuador, he decided to take over from the original contractor and carried the project through. “I took over the

project not for the money, but because I saw how much the Master cared about the project and how many Tzu Chi volunteers were working for my country. I also wanted to help Martin and ease his heavy burden.”

Martin Kuo graduated from Taiwan’s Fu Jen University with a major in German. He later went to the United States and built a business from scratch. A self-made man, he had only US\$200 on him at his most difficult time during that period. Still, he managed to make it in the



The church reconstruction project in Canoa included not just a church, but living quarters for priests and nuns and classrooms for children's Bible studies and vocational training.

JAMIE PUERTA



Clad in their volunteer uniforms and holding their volunteer ID cards, eight Ecuadorians who have joined Tzu Chi pose with Jenyffer Ruiz (first from right). Ruiz was the first Tzu Chi volunteer in Ecuador.

CAI HUI-JING

end, and he became a successful entrepreneur with a happy family.

After he had built a successful business, Kuo started frequenting casinos in Las Vegas. He gambled large sums of money in their VIP rooms. His company's general manager, Chen Ci Jiang (陳慈江), was a Tzu Chi volunteer who always wanted to bring him into Tzu Chi. Kuo started donating regularly to Tzu Chi after a major earthquake hit Taiwan on September 21, 1999, but he was still reluctant to become a volunteer. It wasn't until a massive wildfire in San Diego in 2003 burned

down many luxurious mansions that he decided to join Tzu Chi as a volunteer. The wildfire made him realize that everyone stands equal before a disaster and that he shouldn't wait any longer to give of himself. He received his volunteer certification in 2007.

Kuo put in a lot of effort cultivating local volunteers in the wake of the 2016 earthquake in Ecuador. His years of experience in international relief work had taught him that only when local people commit themselves to carrying out Tzu Chi missions in their country can the Great Love of Tzu Chi really take root in that country.

Jenyffer Ruiz said, "If not for Martin, I would not have become a Tzu Chi volunteer." She had lived and worked in the United States for 24 years, and it was there she had first come into contact with Buddhism and Zen meditation. In

2015, she took an early retirement and returned to Ecuador with the aim of contributing to her country with her specialties in education and speech therapy. When the earthquake struck Ecuador in 2016, a friend introduced her to Tzu Chi. She volunteered by interpreting for the Tzu Chi relief team. She thus became the first Tzu Chi volunteer in Ecuador.

"Every time I encountered difficulties," said Ruiz, "Martin would be there within minutes to help me and give me a hug. I have no brothers. Martin and Boris have become like brothers to me." The three of them worked closely together for almost three years to bring the church reconstruction project to fruition. They had their differences in opinion during the process, but it was by working through their differences that they became closer than biological siblings.

When Kuo was asked if he ever thought of quitting when the going got tough, he responded,

Martin Kuo says that the church reconstruction project in Canoa was a combined effort of people from two different religions who pulled off the project with mutual trust and a spirit of unity.

TINA TUAN

ed, "Of course I did!" However, if he had quit, how could he have continued on the Tzu Chi path? Therefore, giving up was never really an option to him.

When the going got tough, he didn't give up, but instead persisted all the more. A devoted disciple of the Master's, he traveled repeatedly between the United States and Ecuador to handle the Tzu Chi work there and inspire more people to join the foundation and serve their own people. In addition to Ruiz and Garcia, eight other residents have become trainee volunteers, and many more have stepped forward to support Tzu Chi activities. These volunteers are like bodhi seeds. With time they will grow and multiply and lead to the formation of a large forest of bodhi trees.

"Many locals attended the inauguration ceremony of the new church, and more and more people are joining Tzu Chi," Kuo commented happily. "In the future, various vocational training courses will even be launched in the church complex. Everything is falling into place."

He felt that all that he had been through was worth it.



A New Milestone

Tzu Chi Jordan Becomes a Registered INGO

By Lin Ling-li

Compiled and translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Photos by Hsiao Yiu-hwa

After working in Jordan for nearly 23 years, Tzu Chi Jordan finally obtained approval this year from the government to become a registered international non-government organization. Holding firm to their commitment to serving the needy, Tzu Chi volunteers in the country will continue to bring light and relief to families afflicted by poverty and illness.

“You are the rose of my heart!” said Chen Chiou Hwa (陳秋華), the head of Tzu Chi Jordan, as he kissed the soft hands of a three-month-old baby girl named Rose.

It was August 23, 2019, and Chen was visiting the girl to see how her surgical wounds had healed after her stitches had been removed. He was happy to find that her wounds had healed well with almost no scars.

A few weeks earlier, in late July, Rose’s mother, Rousl, had brought her little one to a free clinic that Tzu Chi Jordan was holding for Syrian refu-

gees and local needy people. Rose had been born with two extra fingers, and Rousl was worried her daughter would be stigmatized as she grew older as a result of the congenital anomaly. The

A Tzu Chi flag flutters in the wind in the village of Huweyja, in Mafraq, Jordan. A Tzu Chi delegation consisting of over 60 volunteers from Taiwan, the United States, England, and Holland visited the village with fellow volunteers in Jordan in late July 2019 to distribute aid to some Syrian refugees living there.



Prince El Hassan bin Talal of Jordan (left) and Yen Po-wen, CEO of the Tzu Chi charity mission, unveil a sign for the Tzu Chi Jordan office at the Tarabot Social Center on August 1, 2019, after Tzu Chi Jordan became a registered INGO in the nation.

mother was seeking to have the extra digits surgically removed.

Ye Tian-hao (葉添浩), a plastic surgeon from Taiwan and a member of the Tzu Chi International Medical Association (TIMA), originally wanted to operate on Rose onsite, but local regulations prevented him from doing so. Rousl waited until Ye had finished seeing all his patients for the day and pleaded with him again to help her daughter. She explained that if she took her daughter to the hospital for surgery, it would set her back 400 Jordanian dinar (US\$565), a sum which she, a refugee from Syria, couldn’t afford. After evaluation, Ye agreed to do it. He and Chen Chiou Hwa asked Rousl to bring her daughter two days later to the hotel where Ye and a Tzu Chi medical team were staying for the surgery. After a great deal of hassle, Ye was finally able to remove the two extra fingers for Rose.

Three weeks after the operation—long after the members of the medical team had returned to their respective countries—a Jordanian doctor removed Rose’s stitches. The physician remarked that the Taiwanese doctor had done a great job with the surgery. He even waived his fee for taking out the stitches. The kindness of the two doctors saved Rose from the ridicule she might otherwise have had to face if she hadn’t had the sur-

gery. Rose’s story was posted on Tzu Chi Jordan’s Facebook page and has attracted a lot of likes. Another heartwarming story posted on the page was that of Elaf, also a Syrian refugee. When she was four months old, she escaped to Jordan in her mother’s arms. Elaf suffered from an umbilical hernia, which had put her life at risk. Her mother sought help for several months looking for treatment, but was unable to find any organization willing to help them.

In March 2016, Tzu Chi volunteers in Jordan happened to be in the northern border town of Ramtha, which abuts Syria, extending aid to Syrian refugees. Elaf’s mother approached the volunteers and asked if they could help her daughter. The volunteers agreed and Elaf was subsequently taken to a hospital in Amman, the national capital, for surgery. Tzu Chi Jordan began implementing a medical aid program for refugee children after Elaf.

That was more than three years ago, and Elaf is now a vivacious little girl. This August, when Tzu Chi volunteers visited her and her family, she nestled up close to volunteer Abeer Aglan M. Madanat and talked to her nonstop. She told Abeer how she fed her younger brother and how they played and wrestled with each other. Abeer gently touched Elaf’s belly button and asked, “You used to hurt here. Does it still hurt now?”

“I’m Elaf, my father’s daughter. How is it possible for me to feel any pain?” Elaf put on a brave face, as if saying, “Come on, don’t you know whose daughter I am? I’ll never complain about pain.”

"Do you know my name?" Abeer asked again.

"I know you are one of the people in blue," Elaf replied. Her surgery three years before had forged a strong link between her and Tzu Chi. "I love you all very much. My sister does too."

"Elaf, I love you too. But why do you love us?" Abeer asked further.

"I don't know why, but I just love you very much," Elaf said.

"The people in blue," as the little girl called the Tzu Chi volunteers who had helped her, had served the needy in Jordan for nearly 23 years. After they had worked for over two

decades in the country, the volunteers' efforts finally received official acknowledgement this year, when Tzu Chi Jordan was certified by the Jordanian government as an international non-government organization (INGO).

In April this year, Chen Chiou Hwa visited the Tzu Chi headquarters in Hualien, Taiwan, and reported this happy news to Master Cheng Yen. He told the Master that Tzu Chi Jordan had obtained approval from the government to become a registered INGO on January 23. After hearing that about this milestone, the Master expressed her expectations for the branch office: "Respect everyone regardless of their religious affiliations. Respect for life has always been a cherished value of ours. I hope every one of you will continue to put your love into action and bring light to more needy people in the country."

Life is priceless

What's the significance behind Tzu Chi Jordan's becoming a registered INGO? It means that the branch office will now have more latitude to participate in the discussion and implementation of local and international charity affairs. To the United Nations and its affiliated agencies, Tzu Chi Jordan is now a reliable partner in the international community, and the different sides can now work more closely together on refugee issues. This is a happy result of Tzu Chi's longstanding philanthropic efforts in the country and around the world.

Our world is full of suffering, and Tzu Chi volunteers everywhere are doing their part to



Rousl (second from right) took her daughter, Rose, who was born with two extra fingers, to a Tzu Chi free clinic in Jordan in late July this year to seek medical help. Dr. Ye Tian-hao (first from left), from Taiwan, operated on the baby girl on August 2.

bring relief to the less fortunate. Among the less fortunate are many children. After Elaf, Chen and his fellow volunteers in Jordan helped more than 1,300 refugee children obtain medical care. Behind these 1,300 children were 1,300 families; this means that they have made a difference in 1,300 families.

"With love comes the power to help others," said Yen Po-wen (顏博文), CEO of the Tzu Chi charity mission. "The value of one's life is not measured by how much money one has, but by how much love." Yen said those words on August 1, 2019, the day Tzu Chi Jordan put up its plate after being certified as an INGO. Yen and Prince El Hassan bin Talal of Jordan together unveiled the new sign to celebrate the occasion.

Around the same time, a Tzu Chi medical team consisting of over 60 medical professionals and support volunteers from Taiwan, the United States, England, and Holland carried out a free clinic mission in Jordan. Prince El Hassan praised these volunteers' efforts: "Your compassion has brought you once again to Jordan. Embracing a sense of mission and equipped with medical expertise, you traveled from various countries to Jordan to bring hope to local needy people and help them believe in a better future. If everyone could reach out to others in need as you are doing, a better world would be in our hands."



Dr. Ye Tan-hao operates on Rose.

Pulling out all the stops

In five days, from July 28 to August 1, the medical team conducted five medical events in four places, serving 2,517 patient visits. Each time the team arrived at a new venue, everyone, doctor or not, pitched in to help upload equipment and supplies so that everything could be quickly set up to kick off the event.

Some venues did not have steady electricity, which really tested the patience of the volunteers whose responsibility was to set up the equipment and make sure it functioned properly so that the large influx of patients could be served.

"Brother, the water at the dental clinic refuses to come out." "Brother, something is wrong with this pedal." "Brother..." With requests for their help coming in one after another, the "handyman" volunteers were kept very busy. Beads of perspiration formed and sparkled on their faces as they bustled around fixing all kinds of problems. Their shirts became soaked in sweat, dried out, and were soaked again.

"It's so hot!" The blistering summer sun blazed down, driving the temperature up and making the clinic sites very hot. The conditions were espe-

cially challenging in the equipment-intensive dental clinics, in which all the dentists and their assistants were garbed in insulation gowns. The temperature couldn't be brought down even with the air conditioning going full blast. In the end volunteers could only open all the windows and allow the hot air from outdoors to spill in.

The large crowds coming for medical treatment contributed to the high temperatures, but the endless stream of patients indicated just how much in demand the free clinic services were. Volunteers who were unoccupied took to fanning the dentists and dental assistants with cardboard to help them feel cooler. But the "fanners" themselves got tired and hot too, and occasionally others took up posts behind them to fan them.

Mohamad Saeed, a Jordanian dentist who helped out at the events, said that though he still felt hot with the volunteers fanning him, their heartwarming gesture brought a lot of good cheer to him.

Love in the desert

In 1997, volunteer Lin Hui-zhen (林慧真) brought the seeds of Tzu Chi into Jordan, and a Tzu Chi office was set up in the country in September of the same year. Lin sadly passed away



Volunteers unload medical equipment and supplies for a free clinic in Ghawr Al Safi, Karak, Jordan.



A volunteer fans two medical workers with cardboard in a free clinic in Ghawr Al Mazra'a, Karak, Jordan. The temperature at the time was over 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit).



Mohamad Saeed, a Jordanian dentist (middle), and Dentist Kenneth Liao (廖進興), of TIMA USA, perform triage at a free clinic in Ghawr Al Mazra'a.

due to illness the following year, but Chen Chiou Hwa and others followed in her footsteps and continued to carry out charity work in the nation.

Volunteers there serve an area that extends from the border town of Mafraq in northern Jordan to regions south of the Dead Sea. Every summer and winter and around the month of Ramadan, volunteers travel across the desert and distribute daily necessities to people receiving long-term aid from Tzu Chi.

In 2011, Syrian refugees started pouring into Jordan. In the process of providing daily necessities and financial assistance for them, volunteers saw their need for medical care. In response, the volunteers, despite their small number, began helping refugees obtain medical care and accompanying them on hospital visits. To help more refugees, in 2014 a Tzu Chi free clinic and aid distribution team from Taiwan started visiting Jordan every year to render free medical services and help distribute aid.

Rose, mentioned at the beginning of this article,

was treated by the medical team that visited Jordan in July this year. Not long after the team had returned to Taiwan, they learned via Tzu Chi Jordan's Facebook page that local volunteers had gone to Al Abasyiah to hold more distributions. The team also saw a post on Osama, a refugee boy afflicted with Crohn's disease. He used to be a bag of bones before receiving treatment for his condition, but after undergoing surgery with Tzu Chi's help, he filled out and his complexion grew healthier. The team prayed for Rawaa, another refugee child who had received help from Tzu Chi. She suffered from a condition called "imperforate anus," which occurs when the anal opening is absent or not in a normal position. The team prayed that her third operation would go smoothly.

Elaf said that though she doesn't know why, she just loves the people in blue. What is love? This is probably a question none of us can answer, because love is intangible and indefinable. However, we can see it in Elaf's smile, in Rose's smile, and in their mothers' smiles; we can hear it in the sound of reading that wafts from a classroom in the desert where refugee children go to school. The power of love is not to be underestimated. With it, hope can bloom in the most arid place. ♣

9/21/1999

The September 21 Earthquake

A Look Back 20 Years Later

That night, the earth shook and trembled powerfully. The first thing that Tzu Chi volunteers thought was: "What can I do?" Even though traffic was snarled and their own homes were damaged, nothing could stop them from rushing to the aid of the less fortunate. They witnessed death, loss, and tremendous grief as they reached out to those whose lives had been turned upside down by the temblor. Looking back two decades later, volunteers are glad that they were there when they were needed.

By Ye Zi-hao

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

At 1:47 a.m. on September 21, 1999, a tremendous earthquake jolted Taiwan from its slumber. People screamed, jumped out of their beds in panic, and ran for their lives. Some didn't even get the chance to rise from their beds. Impermanence intervened, and they were forever separated from their loved ones.

That was 20 years ago. For most, memories of that time have blurred with age. For those who lost their loved ones, however, the disaster left indelible marks—the longing they feel for their lost family members will always be there. The quake also left a lasting impact on those who personally took part in the relief work.

The epicenter

The epicenter of the September 21, 1999, earthquake was located in Jiji Township, Nantou County, central Taiwan. Originating just eight kilometers (five miles) below the surface, the magnitude 7.3 temblor brought instant, extensive damage to Nantou and its northern neighbor, Taichung. Casualties and injuries were also reported in Changhua, Yunlin, Chiayi, Miaoli, Taipei City, and Taipei County (now New Taipei City). According to statistics released by the Taiwanese government, the quake lasted 102 seconds, killed 2,415 people, and damaged over 10,000 buildings.

Tzu Chi volunteer Lin Shen (林慎), who lives in Jiji Township, recollected that she didn't go to bed until after one o'clock that night. She was so worn out after a long day that she didn't pay much attention when she felt the earth moving soon after she lay down. She felt that she had been put into a rocking cradle. It wasn't until she heard the thumping sounds of objects falling on the floor that she realized danger had descended on her and her home.

When she got up and tried to open the door, it refused to budge. "It took all the strength I had to push it open," she recalled. When she finally got it open, she ran to help her mother-in-law get out of the house. Fortunately, their home did not suffer much damage.

Lin's daughter lived in the same town. She rushed to Lin's house to check on how things were going, and she reported, terrified, that many people who lived on her way there had died.

Electricity had been knocked out by the quake,

so Lin, her daughter, and Lin's sister-in-law—all three of them Tzu Chi volunteers—began using the light from the headlight of a motor scooter to assess damage in the dark streets. They heard people crying and calling out for help all along the way.

Lin rushed to the fire station to ask for help. She said to a man there, "Can your people go out to rescue victims?" "Our men are all out," the man said. He had stayed behind to hold down the fort.

The temblor had wreaked such devastating damage that first responders were spread very thin. Their first priority was to rescue people who were still alive. Recovery of the dead would have to wait. One of Lin's sisters-in-law had died in the disaster, but no one was around to remove her body from the collapsed building. They could only wait.

Since almost all communications were cut off, Lin, holding in her grief and fear, went to the local government-run water purification station to use their phone. Lin placed a call to the Jing Si Abode, the Tzu Chi headquarters in Hualien, eastern Taiwan. When the call was put through, Master Cheng Yen said to her, "You must calm down. Remember not to let your fellow villagers starve. Take good care of them. If you need anything, give your requests to our Taichung branch office. I'll immediately arrange for needed items to be sent over."

That was after five in the morning, but more than two hours earlier, before three, a disaster relief coordination center had already been set up at the Jing Si Abode. In the heavily hit Taichung area, Xiao Hui-te (蕭惠特), a Tzu Chi employee, had arrived at the Tzu Chi branch office on Minchuan Road at 2:05 a.m. Disaster reports and requests for help began flooding in. Soon afterwards, everyone at the office—in departments including social work, finance, and general affairs—took up their posts and went to



Dongshi Township in Taichung is located on a fault bend. More than 300 people there were killed in the September 21, 1999, temblor, making it the town with the most fatalities in Taiwan. COURTESY OF WANG YI-FAN

work. Tzu Chi volunteers all over the island had also mobilized.

"There was a lot to do," recalled volunteer Zeng Cai-qin (曾彩琴), an elementary school teacher in Zhushan Township, Nantou County. "First we delivered supplies to the needy. Then we began serving hot meals. We also set up medical stations and inspected collapsed buildings." She said that after the earthquake, she quickly swept up the shattered glass in her home before putting on her volunteer uniform and going out

to help. Even after working all day, she didn't return to her damaged home to rest. "My family was all taking shelter at Zhushan Junior High. I didn't join them there because I needed to volunteer and didn't want to go that far. I slept in my car instead."

In the aftermath of the quake, Tzu Chi set up 30 aid supply stations in Taichung and Nantou, providing food, tents, sleeping bags, comforters, lighting equipment, etc. 24 hours a day for quake victims and first responders.

Knowing that many people had run out of their homes in a hurry and all they had was the clothes on their backs, Master Cheng Yen instructed Tzu Chi volunteers to immediately distribute emergency cash to victims.

Tzu Chi volunteers render logistic support to victims and rescue workers at a collapsed 12-story building in Songshan, Taipei.

LIN FENG-QI



Volunteers first took out all the cash they had at home to distribute, but that was far from enough. They couldn't withdraw money from banks either, because electricity was out and banks were not open. Even ATM machines were not working. When volunteers in Taipei and Taichung reported on the situation, the Hualien headquarters arranged to have 20,000,000 NT dollars (US\$666,670) withdrawn from banks in Hualien and rushed to the disaster areas in Taipei and Taichung.

Mobilized island-wide

Before 11 a.m. on September 21, volunteers from Taichung had arrived at the Jiji township office. The Tzu Chi flags flying on their vehicles and the relief supplies they had brought lifted survivors' spirits.

Group after group of volunteers from all over the island also began arriving at the disaster areas in northern and central Taiwan. They assessed damage, visited affected households, and distributed aid. Volunteer Lin Shen said, "There were volunteers from Miaoli, Changhua, and other places. Volunteers from Tainan came here to Jiji to cook for us, and more from Kaohsiung went to help out in Zhushan. There was a clear assignment of areas of responsibility."

Like non-government sectors that had quickly mobilized, the military, police, and firefighters had been quick to respond too. Gu Feng-tai (谷風泰), a Tzu Chi volunteer in Kaohsiung, was a colonel in the Army at the time. He recalled that the shaking was so powerful that they knew that there was bound to be serious damage. "A disas-

ter relief command center was immediately set up at our headquarters in Longtan," Gu said. "As soon as day broke, our commander-in-chief, accompanied by top-ranking staff, took a helicopter to central Taiwan to inspect the damage."

On the same day, the Army Headquarters set up a command station in Fengyuan, Taichung, to direct troops stationed in central Taiwan to help with the relief work in the disaster areas. An operations order was issued to mobilize 3,000 soldiers from southern Taiwan to aid the mission. The soldiers were commanded to make a rapid march and arrive at Jiji by six the following morning.

Within the golden 72 hours, military personnel, firefighters, and volunteer rescue workers from all over Taiwan bent over backward to rescue people trapped under rubble. Thirty-eight rescue teams from 20 countries, including the United States, Japan, Korea, and Russia, also rushed to Taiwan to join the rescue. Thanks to their around-the-clock efforts, some people were saved. But a far greater number of people sadly perished.

The military provided a lot of body bags to contain the deceased. Tzu Chi also supplied 1,600 body bags. In addition, the foundation borrowed ten refrigerated containers from the China Ship Building Corporation (now known

Rescuers search through the rubble for survivors at a three-building complex that collapsed in Xinzhuang, Taipei. The September 21 earthquake toppled and damaged more than 100,000 buildings in Taiwan. Rescue workers from over 20 countries arrived on the island to help rescue victims.

GUO YI-TE



as “CSBC Corporation, Taiwan”) to help store the bodies of the departed. Lee Tsung-chi (李宗吉), a Tzu Chi volunteer and shipping tycoon, also dispatched two reefer containers from his company to central Taiwan.

To prevent the bodies stored in the containers from sticking to each other, Tzu Chi volunteers went into the containers every half hour to turn the bodies. “Do you have bracelets of Buddhist prayer beads to spare? Can you give me one?” some soldiers asked Tzu Chi volunteers. The young soldiers were helping move bodies and they were shaken by being so close to so many deaths. Volunteers generously gave these young people sets of prayer beads to help calm their minds.

Relief supplies poured into the disaster areas after the temblor. Tzu Chi volunteers helped sort the items and distributed them to victims.

HSIAO YIU-HWA

Temporary housing

From the time the quake hit on September 21 to the end of that month, Tzu Chi volunteers put in more than 100,000 shifts in the disaster areas. They served 1,300,000 hot meals and distributed relief supplies and provided medical treatment to 260,000 people. With supplies donated by kind-hearted people around the island pouring into the disaster zones, survivors were not in need of necessities. However, they did need places to live.

Volunteer Zeng Cai-qin, the elementary school teacher mentioned above, recalled that classes at her school were suspended after the quake, so she threw herself into Tzu Chi’s relief work. When she returned to her school to teach on the seventh day after the quake, she found the playground covered by tents for survivors. Since water and electricity had been interrupted, sanitary conditions were not good.



Master Cheng Yen visits Zhongliao Township, Nantou County, to inspect the conditions there and supervise Tzu Chi’s relief operations.

HUANG JIN-YI

A tent was not an ideal place to live in in the long run. To help the disaster areas return to normalcy as soon as possible, Master Cheng Yen decided to help build temporary housing for survivors. “Only when the survivors are properly settled will their minds be at peace,” she said.

The housing units Tzu Chi built for victims were each 432 square feet in area. Each unit contained three bedrooms, a living room, a dining area, a kitchen, and a bathroom. By providing the complete facilities, the foundation hoped to help survivors live more comfortably, thereby instilling strength in them and inspiring them not to lose heart.

After learning that Tzu Chi was building prefabricated houses for survivors, governments of the counties and cities affected by the quake helped the foundation procure the land. Kind-hearted landowners also provided free land for Tzu Chi to use. On September 29, construction of the first batch of housing units started on a baseball field in Zhongxing New Village in Nantou City. Construction of other batches of housing units followed one after another.

Volunteers from all over Taiwan and even abroad pitched in to help with the construction. They worked rain or shine so that new housing units could be completed as quickly as possible. During that time, Chen Jin-chuan (陳金傳), an electrician and plumber, traveled several times from Taipei, where he lived, to Dongshi and Nantou to volunteer in the project. He said that after the quake, he had driven his own vehicle to the heavily hit Zhongliao area to deliver relief supplies to victims, but he soon realized that working alone would never be better than providing organized aid along with others. That’s why he joined Tzu Chi volunteers in helping survivors. The following year, he even began training to become a certified volunteer.

Chen remarked that things progressed rapidly with so many people working together to build the houses. “It’s hard to imagine how amazing it was if you didn’t participate in it personally,” he said. “It was like time-lapse photography. One day the ground was all cleared, the next day the foundation was laid, and soon after the frames of the houses went up. Everyone worked hard because we all hoped that survivors could move out of their tents as soon as possible. A tent wasn’t a comfortable place to live in.”



In the aftermath of the quake, medical teams formed by staffers from Tzu Chi hospitals and members of the Tzu Chi International Medical Association visited eight severely hit towns to provide medical aid.

GUO YI-TE

On November 15, 1999, 320 prefabricated houses in Puli Tzu Chi Great Love Village I were inaugurated. Hong Wu-zheng (洪武正), a Tzu Chi volunteer from Taichung, remembered seeing a young woman with five youngsters in tow in the village. Guided by a volunteer, they were trying to locate the house that they were assigned to by looking at doorplate numbers. When they found it, the woman and children hugged each other and cried uncontrollably in front of the house.

The mother was young-looking, but two of her children were already as tall as she was. Hong and a few female volunteers approached them and found out that the older children were not hers but her husband's older brother's, and the one she was carrying on her back was her husband's younger brother's. The older and younger brothers, their wives, and even the woman's own husband had all been killed in the quake. The woman told the volunteers in tears that she was the only adult left in her family, and she was at a loss about what to do. The volunteers immediate-

ly listed the family as one that the foundation would help.

The construction project lasted from September 29 to December 28. During that time, Tzu Chi volunteers and other people from Taiwan and abroad put in more than 180,000 shifts to complete the project. In three months, they finished over 1,700 temporary housing units in Nantou, Yunlin, and Taichung.

Immediately afterwards, volunteers threw themselves into a school reconstruction project called Project Hope. (Under this initiative, Tzu Chi rebuilt 51 schools destroyed or damaged in the earthquake.) At the same time, volunteers continued to provide care for Great Love Village residents. Members of the Tzu Chi Teachers Association and the Tzu Chi Collegiate Association also held summer and winter camps at Project Hope schools to help children emerge from the traumatic experience of the earthquake.

Two decades later

"It's been 20 years. How've you been, everyone?" a volunteer asked the attendees of a reunion held by the Tzu Chi Puli office in May 2019 for former residents of three Great Love Villages in Puli. Time had flown. Nearly 20 years had passed since the earthquake.



Tzu Chi volunteers hit the streets to raise funds for quake victims.

HONG HAI-PENG

Gao Zong-yang (高宗陽) was a teacher at Puli Vocational High School when the temblor hit. He and his family became homeless after the earthquake, and they later moved into one of the three Great Love Villages in Puli. "We would've felt differently if we had rented a house to live in instead of moving into the village," said Gao. "My wife was so traumatized by the quake that she became frightened of older houses, especially those built of bricks." He remembered that when they moved into the prefabricated house built by Tzu Chi, his wife had cheerfully exclaimed, "Now we no longer have to be afraid of earthquakes." What's more, the environment of the village was so good that Gao and his wife couldn't wait to go home every day after work.

"When we were moving out of the village," Gao continued, "we thought of how Master Cheng Yen and Tzu Chi volunteers had helped us. We wanted to say, 'Thank you,' but we didn't know who to talk to. Now, 17 years later, we can finally extend our appreciation to you here."

Gao thanked the foundation for giving his family such excellent support when they were at their most helpless. He was now retired and had begun participating in public service activities as

a way to give back to those who had helped him years ago, even though they didn't know him.

Xu Feng-zhu (徐逢助) was another survivor who once lived in a Tzu Chi prefabricated house in Puli. "Tzu Chi volunteers have given me unceasing care and encouragement over the past 20 years," he observed. "They've given me courage to face the future." There were five people in Xu's family. Their house collapsed in the temblor. After the calamity, the financial burden on him was so heavy he had to work odd jobs in addition to his regular one. That's why he was very grateful that he and his family could move into a Tzu Chi prefabricated house. With his family settled, he was better able to focus on his work and make money to support them. Looking back, the 60-year-old Xu said, "Because of the experience, I became a Tzu Chi donating member. I wanted to help needy people in the world."

The passage of time may have blurred the footprints of love from that year, but seeds of kindness had been planted in people's hearts, prompting them to put their love into action. Love has endured despite the heartrending destruction.

(Information provided by Zhang Li-yun, Zhang Mei-ling, Zheng Shu-zhen, Shi Jin-yu, and Xu Kun-long)

Technology for Disaster Response

Providing Aid More Safely After a Disaster

By Ye Zi-hao

Translated by George Chen

Being prepared at all times helps Tzu Chi volunteers respond better to unforeseeable disasters. New technology further enhances the efficiency of disaster assessment and response. It also prevents rescuers and helpers from becoming disaster victims themselves.

“When we learn that a fire has broken out,” said Tzu Chi volunteer Cai Ming-hong (蔡明鴻), of northern Taiwan, “we immediately rush to the scene to assess the situation: How many fire engines have been dispatched? What are the conditions of the victims? Which hospitals have the casualties been sent to?” With this information, hospital visits can be organized, emergency cash given out, and other relief efforts initiated. “There is a standard operating procedure for us to follow,” he said. Cai went on to explain that volunteers have set up group chats on messaging apps, so that information can be quickly disseminated when a disaster happens. The Tzu Chi headquarters in Hualien, eastern Taiwan, is simultaneously informed in this way.

To respond quickly to calamities such as fires and traffic accidents, volunteers need to stay alert to what is happening around them and in their communities. As for weather-related events, such as typhoons and torrential rainfalls, measures are taken based on information provided by the Central Weather Bureau.

Lu Xue-Zheng (呂學正), who leads the disaster prevention team at Tzu Chi’s Department of Charity Mission Development, said: “As soon as the Central Weather Bureau issues a sea alert for a typhoon, we activate our disaster prevention protocol to make sure that every responsible volunteer is ready to be mobilized.” Tzu Chi branch offices and recycling stations will also be notified to start preparing for the storm; for example, they might start constructing sandbag barriers around

building entrances to prevent water from entering. “We also assist care recipients and older people who live alone to prepare for the typhoon,” said Lu. “For example, if they live by a river or up in the mountains, we enquire if their residence is safe and if we need to help them replenish their emergency supplies.” As for evacuation from endangered areas, that’s government’s call; the government is the only authority that has the power to enforce evacuation when needed.

People are usually anxious when they are evacuated, and might neglect to bring any daily necessities with them. Sometimes they even forget to bring their payment cards with them. “This is where our volunteers come in. We visit evacuees at shelters to offer emotional support as well as to provide emergency supplies and money,” said Lu.

Disciplined Tzu Chi volunteer teams in Taiwan are known for offering organized and systematic emergency aid to disaster victims. That is what happened for the September 11, 1999, earthquake, Typhoon Morakot in 2009, Typhoon Soudelor in 2015, and the two February 6 temblors in 2016 and 2018. Local volunteers can usually handle the response to disaster events if they are on a small scale, but if a disaster is too massive and there is an inadequate number of volunteers in the stricken area to cope with the aftermath, volunteers from other areas are mobilized to help out.

Drones for aerial survey

With decades of experience in disaster relief and in providing care and support to disaster vic-

tim, the Tzu Chi volunteers’ “Blue Sky and White Cloud” image (coming from the uniforms they wear—which consist of blue shirts and white trousers) has become a symbol of assurance and trustworthiness to the public. Nevertheless, it is not easy to successfully pull off each disaster relief mission. The team responsible for coordinating such operations needs the right information to correctly assess the situation and make optimal decisions. They work to make sure that the limited resources available to them can be maximized and that everyone’s safety is ensured at the same time.

Tzu Chi volunteers simulate disaster relief mobilization. By entering the address of the Tzu Chi Miaoli Campus into the Tzu Chi Disaster Prevention Information Network and setting the search area to a one-kilometer radius, they can obtain information about the number of Tzu Chi volunteers living in the designated area and other relevant data.

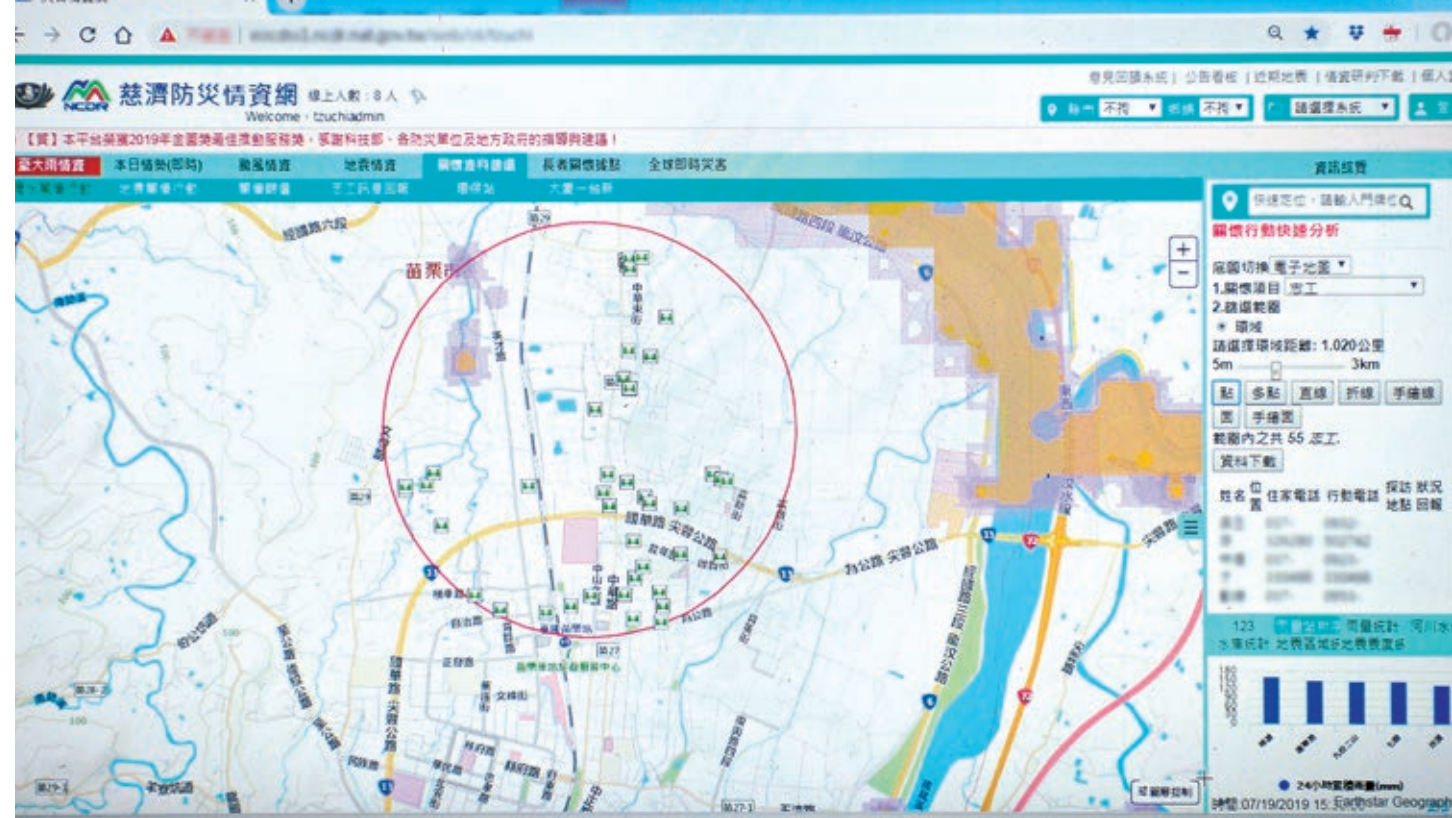
PHOTO COURTESY OF LU XUE-ZHENG

Assessing damage in a disaster area where danger has not yet entirely passed is a risky task. Lu mentioned that he was once a member of a Tzu Chi team that went into a remote mountain village in Hsinchu, northern Taiwan, to assess damage after a typhoon. The roads there were known to collapse frequently. “When we reached a certain road section,” Lu said, “we found that the cars in front of us had begun to back up—a collapse had occurred in the road ahead. Soon

after, we learned that another collapse had occurred in the road behind us. So, just like that, we were trapped there on the mountain road, unable to move forward or back.” He said he still shudders at the experience. They were trapped there for two hours.

Senior volunteer Luo Mei-zhu (羅美珠) shared another experience, one in which she was caught in a dilemma of whether to put the needs of disaster victims or the safety of volunteers first. In the aftermath of Typhoon Soudelor in 2015, Tzu Chi volunteers could not reach the most severely hit Old Street area in Wulai, New Taipei City, northern Taiwan, because massive mudslides had blocked access to the area. “As a result, we first spent four days helping to clean up the accessible Guishan neighborhood, also in Wulai,” Luo recalled. “Later, when I went to Old Street to survey the conditions there, I was confronted by a group of emotional villagers asking why Tzu Chi volunteers had not come to help them.” The New Taipei City government also had hoped that Tzu Chi volunteers could quickly enter Old Street and work with the military to clean up the area.

It wasn’t that Tzu Chi volunteers forgot about the villagers in Old Street or purposely neglected their needs. It was just that Old Street is situated in a narrow valley. Once the cleanup began, over a thousand volunteers would have swarmed into the area. Their safety needed to be ensured before the operation could be launched. Volunteers made





↑ A Tzu Chi volunteer practices operating a drone. Compared with a ground-level survey, aerial photography can help volunteers more quickly grasp the situation over a larger disaster area. The technology increases the efficiency of disaster assessment and enhances the safety of volunteers. WANG FENG-JIAO

← Tzu Chi and the Chien Hsin University of Science and Technology work together to hold workshops on how to use unmanned aerial vehicles to inspect conditions in disaster areas. Under the guidance of professionals, volunteers also learn to create 3D images using images captured by a drone. WEN QIAO-HAO

three visits to Old Street to assess the situation there before deciding to start on the cleanup. “Our only condition was that we would need to stop all work if torrential rains began,” Luo said. “We had our volunteers’ safety to consider.”

Landslides, collapsed roadways, or flooding can deter volunteers on their way to assess damage or provide aid in the aftermath of a disaster and jeopardize their safety. To deal with such conditions, Tzu Chi has collaborated with the Department of Applied Geomatics at the Chien Hsin University of Science and Technology, in Taoyuan, northern Taiwan, to hold workshops on how to use unmanned aerial vehicles (“drones”) to survey a disaster area. Using a drone to survey a disaster area can improve the efficiency of disaster assessment and better ensure the safety of volunteers. The workshops also teach how to produce 3D images using images captured by a drone.

“We use miniature quadcopters, with flight ranges of less than 7 kilometers,” said Li Ji-wen (黎驥文), director of the Department of Applied Geomatics. “They can be used in smaller scale disaster assessment missions.” He explained that if a disaster assessment team wants to assess the damage to buildings after an earthquake, determine the extent of devastation in areas hit by floods, or set up a site to carry out disaster relief work, drones coupled with 3D modeling technology can be put to good use. “When an earthquake struck Hualien on February 6, 2018, we happened to have a team there,” Li said. “They participated in the rescue work by providing timely drone-collected information to the National Fire Agency.”

3D modeling technology can be employed to synthesize stereographic images using images taken by a drone from different angles. Such technology-enhanced images can provide specific details of objects or landscapes, such as those of collapsed buildings or disaster-stricken areas. The technology is a great tool for rescuers and disaster assessment personnel. It allows users to zoom in on the critical areas for clearer, better images, thus enabling better rescue coordination.

Since July 2017, the collaboration between Tzu Chi and Chien Hsin University has produced more than 50 volunteers with drone flying and 3D mapping capabilities. In ordinary times, these “pilots” use drones to document Tzu Chi community activities. When a disaster strikes, they transform into an “investigation corps” by piloting drones to conduct reconnaissance of affected areas. For example, volunteer Huang

Wei-ran (黃威然), of Tainan, southern Taiwan, once put his aerial photography skills to good use when southern Taiwan was hit by massive rain-induced flooding in August 2018.

“Local residents told us we were unlikely to get to the area we were trying to reach because the two villages we had to pass through before we could reach our destination were submerged in floodwaters,” Huang recalled. Thankfully, the aerial photography skills he had acquired at workshops conducted jointly by Tzu Chi and Chien Hsin University allowed the volunteer team to overcome the challenge of traffic blockages and assess the flooding conditions remotely.

At present, the drones used by the volunteers have all been self-purchased. Even so, there has been a push to help the volunteers obtain their drone pilot licenses, a mandatory requirement taking effect in 2020, as ordained by an amendment to Taiwan’s Civil Aviation Act. “Starting next year, we must have official licenses to carry out drone-flying missions,” Director Li said. “Therefore, we need to retrain the volunteers to pass the licensing exams.”

Using big data to reduce and avoid disaster

In addition to drones, Tzu Chi has also begun using big data to aid disaster relief work and enhance the safety of volunteers. On April 16, 2019, the Tzu Chi Foundation and the National Science and Technology Center for Disaster Reduction (NCDR) signed the Disaster Prevention Technology Cooperation Agreement in the Jing Si Hall in Xindian, northern Taiwan. Both parties also used the occasion to present their jointly developed Tzu Chi Disaster Prevention Information Network.

Chen Hong-yu (陳宏宇), director of NCDR, pointed out that the network collects and provides real-time information such as for rainfalls, flooding, typhoons, earthquakes and their after-shocks. The instant information is consolidated, via a big data platform and a computing system, into three supercomputers provided by the Ministry of Science and Technology.

The strong database behind this network system integrates the research results from government, industry, and academia over the past decade. Take typhoons, which often strike Taiwan, for example. The NCDR has collected and analyzed six decades’ worth of typhoon-related data and inputted it all into the system. The information can serve as a basis to make future predictions and help reduce and avoid disasters.



Yen Po-wen, CEO of the Tzu Chi charity mission (second from right), and Chen Hong-Yu, director of the National Science and Technology Center for Disaster Reduction (second from left), signed the Disaster Prevention Technology Cooperation Agreement on behalf of their respective organizations on April 16, 2019. Bringing charity and technology together in this way will benefit society more than each could do alone.

YAN FU-JIANG

This network system can also provide very detailed real-time rainfall information at intervals of every hour, every three hours, or every six hours. This information can be provided for every county and city in Taiwan, and even for Taiwan's outlying islands. Information about the extent of flooding in an area is also included. When volunteers can gather such data in advance, they can avoid dangers of entering deepwater zones.

"Our disaster info network has attracted global attention," said Director Chen. "Many countries in Southeast Asia have asked us to help them build similar systems." The director is very confident in the research results of the center, and he hopes that the collected data can be shared with everyone who needs it. "The information should be provided to all people involved in frontline disaster relief work, such as Tzu Chi volunteers," Chen remarked.

The Tzu Chi Disaster Prevention Information Network was created especially for Tzu Chi volun-

teers. It presents not only instant maps of disaster locations, but also detailed information of the areas, which makes it a very handy tool for volunteers coordinating relief efforts. Take earthquake relief as an example. If volunteers want to find out about the distribution of Tzu Chi care recipients near an epicenter, or the number of Tzu Chi volunteers living near a disaster relief command center, all they need to do is to specify the radius of the area in which they are interested. The residences of the care recipients or volunteers will appear as dots within the specified perimeters on the virtual map. The disaster relief team can therefore quickly grasp on which street a care recipient lives and the extent of damage around their residences.

Yen Po-wen (顏博文), CEO of the Tzu Chi charity mission, conveyed Master Cheng Yen's affirmation for this system: "Many frontline volunteers rush to the aid of the needy without regard for their own lives. Master Cheng Yen is very concerned about that. She doesn't want anyone to sacrifice their life in order to save another one. Therefore, she puts a premium on this information platform and its application."

With the help of new technologies, the safety of volunteers involved in disaster relief work can be enhanced, and the time spent on damage assessment reduced. This frees up the volunteers to do their most important work, which can only be rendered by hearts full of love: providing care and emotional support for disaster victims. ❀

Discover Joy in Life

By Wu Deng-shan

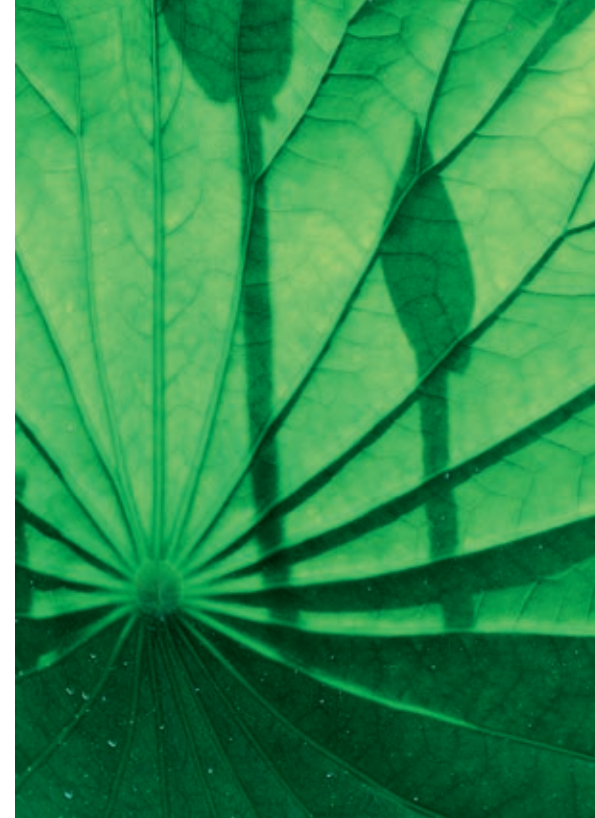
Compiled and translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Photo by Li Bai-shi

Is life full of suffering? If you ask your friends and family this question, most of them will probably answer "yes." But is life hopeless, like a dark, bottomless abyss into which no sun shines? Most of us wouldn't go quite so far as to say that. After all, life has its fair share of joy too: good times, relationships, positive moments of gratification. Why then do we tend to think of life as hard and painful?

When we are under the weather, we distinctly feel our pain or discomfort. When we are healthy, however, we often take it for granted without realizing that we are enjoying the bliss of good health. In other words, we tend to notice and remember painful things more easily. Studies have shown that this tendency to preserve bad memories may have evolved as an evolutionary strategy to guard against future harmful or life-threatening events. If that is so, it would be a challenge to reverse this ingrained tendency—you'd be fighting your own evolutionary history. Even so, should we just succumb to it without making any efforts? I believe that no matter how hard it is, we should all do our best to detect and discover joy in life to counteract that propensity.

The good news is that according to experts, even though our brain is not designed to create happiness, we can train it like a muscle to become stronger and more positive. Ben Franklin said, "Happiness consists more in the small conveniences of pleasures that occur every day, than in great pieces of good fortune that happen but seldom to a man in the course of his life." We can therefore train ourselves to pay more attention to those things in life that bring us happiness and peace, no matter how trivial they are, and develop a habit of counting our blessings. Family, friends, books,



flowers and plants, stars in the sky, memories from our younger days—these may seem commonplace but they can turn out to be a treasure trove of happiness with the help of a positive mindset.

Many years ago, I read a magazine article about an old woman who always wore a smile on her face. She had developed a good habit that helped her remain positive. Every morning when she woke up, she made a wish. She wished that it would be a glorious new day and that she would discover new pleasures and adventures in the course of that day. Such positive thinking sustained her and made her become more attentive to the joys in life.

I smiled after reading that article, and I decided to learn from her. I resolved to start every day with a positive mindset. I would happily do those things I wanted to do while doing my best with those things I was averse to doing in order to improve my abilities. I would also try to help others as much as I could. Being of service to others enhances our sense of well-being. It takes our minds off our problems and helps us feel less isolated.

There are many ways to guide our minds toward being positive. Develop as much compassion for yourself as you do for others. We are not born to suffer and then die. Be nicer to yourself, starting today. We don't have an unlimited supply of energy. It would be a real pity to waste so much of our energy on negative emotions that it affects our creativity and production. ❀

Restoring the Gift of Sight

A Tzu Chi Free Clinic in West Papua, Indonesia

Text and photos by Hadi Pranoto

Abridged and translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

More than 200 people had their cataracts removed during a Tzu Chi free clinic in West Papua, Indonesia. With their sight restored, they no longer have to depend on their families to take care of them. Better yet, they can return to work and help with their families' finances.

“A rumor goes that if you undergo cataract surgery, your eye will be replaced with a cow’s eye,” said Ruben, who used to be a truck driver until his deteriorating eyesight forced him to switch to farming. “I didn’t buy it, so I came here and had my eye operated on.”

The operation was successful and Ruben was very happy. “My eyes are my guide. Having my eyesight restored is like finding a priceless treasure I had lost,” he said with a smile.

On July 19 and 20, 2019, Tzu Chi volunteers in Indonesia held a free eye clinic in the town of Manokwari, West Papua, eastern Indonesia. This was the second time Tzu Chi had provided free medical services in the town. The first clinic was

Susanto Pirono, head of Tzu Chi Biak (first from left), and Herry Rudolf Nahak, West Papua police chief (first from right), share in the joy of patients who have had their cataracts removed at a Tzu Chi free eye clinic in West Papua, eastern Indonesia.



conducted seven years ago in 2012, offering surgery for cataracts, pterygium (a benign overgrowth of tissue on the surface of the eye), and tumors. The latest clinic took place in Bhayangkara Hospital. Among the 259 patients who benefited, 204 received cataract surgery. Some patients had one of their eyes treated seven years ago and were back for surgery on the other eye.

A manifestation of love

The Tzu Chi Biak office in Papua has carried out charity work for nine years. At the invitation of the head of the office, Susanto Pirono, members of the Jakarta chapter of the Tzu Chi International Medical Association have traveled many times to eastern Indonesia to serve local needy people.

The July 2019 eye clinic was a joint effort by Tzu Chi, the West Papua police, the West Papua government, and several community health clinics in Manokwari. The various parties worked together to relieve the suffering of underprivileged people afflicted with illness. Pirono said of the cooperation: “When different sectors of society can join hands to do good deeds and give love without discrimination, a better world is sure to come.”

West Papua police chief Herry Rudolf Nahak pointed out during the opening ceremony that cataracts are the leading cause of blindness in Papua, but local medical resources for treatment are so inadequate that many people suffering from the disease are unable to receive proper treatment. This has affected patients’ ability to work and adversely impacted their families’ financial well-being and quality of life.

A simple postoperative eye test confirmed that Firemon (second from left) had regained his eyesight.



As the event unfolded, more than 200 pre-screened patients entered the operating room in turn to have their eyes operated on. Cataract surgery is a relatively uncomplicated procedure; it takes less than 20 minutes to have the lens of one’s eye removed and replaced with an artificial lens. Most of the patients who had come to the free clinic lived in mountain areas, a long way from the town center. The long, bumpy journey from their homes to the free clinic site, however, could not deter them from coming to the event for treatment and hope.

“These patients’ eyesight is either impaired or completely lost,” said Pirono. “This has deprived them of their ability to work, and their family has had to spend a lot of time taking care of them. Hopefully after the surgery they can work again and no longer have to rely on others.”

Hope ahead

Her eyes closed and her hands clasped together, Martha Basna, a patient who had had her cataract removed at the event, said a prayer as she sat on a bench in the hospital where the free clinic was taking place: “Thank you, God. All this is happening because of you.”

A nurse set about removing the bandage on Basna’s left eye. When she was done, she held up her fingers to test the patient’s postoperative vision. “Two, three, five,” Basna called out based on the number of fingers the nurse had held up, her voice louder the more the nurse stepped back. The nurse smiled. This showed that Basna’s operation had been successful.

A medical condition called hyperuricemia (an excess of uric acid in the blood) had put Basna’s husband out of work. As a result, Basna became the breadwinner of her family. Unfortunately, she lost vision in her left eye two years ago and could only rely on her blurry right eye to see. Even so, many people advised her not to go for the surgery. They said, “What if it fails?” But Basna told them she was not afraid. “God will definitely take care of us,” she said confidently. “I’m sure it will work.”

Basna had always prayed that she could regain her eyesight. Her prayer was answered on this happy day. “I grow cabbage, bananas, leaf mustard, beans, and so on,” she said. “With my vision restored, it will be a lot easier for me to work on my farm. I’ll also be able to sell my vegetables in the market. Thank God for sending these people [the Tzu Chi medical team] all the way from Jakarta to Papua to help us.”

Firemon, 65, and Subrina, 62, brother and sister, had both developed cataracts. Their big family lives in a mountain area where the soil is fertile, and they make a living out of cultivating bananas, chilies, corn, taro, cabbage, and other crops. An endless expanse of wooded mountain land extends before their eyes when they look out from their home. The view is picturesque. However, it took a bumpy, arduous journey of four long hours to travel from their home to Manokwari for the surgery.

Subrina’s right eye had been operated on for a cataract at the Tzu Chi free clinic held seven years before in Manokwari. After that, she regained her ability to live independently and was able to continue farming and weaving bags. This time around, she underwent surgery for her left eye. Her brother, Firemon, used to be optimistic and hard-working, but after he lost his vision he could only resign himself to staying at home and letting his family take care of him. They had had to bathe him, change his clothes for him, feed him, and take care of his other everyday needs. Depressed about his condition, Firemon became a man of few words. His grandson said, “Grandpa became despondent after he lost his sight. He felt bad for not being able to work and take care of himself. He was also sad because he couldn’t read the Bible.”

Happily, his vision was restored by an operation at the Tzu Chi event, and his bright, upbeat personality returned. He smiled at and greeted the patient sitting next to him at the free clinic. “I can finally work in the field now and go to church by myself,” he said cheerfully.

The Illustrated JING SI A PHORISMS



The Buddha says:

All the people we love
will eventually part from us.
All living beings will ultimately decay.
Therefore, do not grieve
when beautiful things deteriorate and disappear.

The human body is made up of the Four Elements of Earth, Water, Fire, and Wind. These elements only come together when the causes and conditions are right, and they fall apart when the causes have ended. That is why sickness and death are normal things in this world.

Like many people, I often experience the pain of illness too. However, I always accept the pain calmly, without letting it bother me. The body may be weak and frail, but the spirit can still be bright.



Many businesspeople are curious: What is the philosophy behind Tzu Chi's management style?

Master Cheng Yen replied: The best management style is not to control or restrain people, but rather to help them discipline and manage themselves. Once their conscience and love are brought out, they will all work cheerfully.

Translated by E E Ho and W.L. Rathje; drawings by Tsai Chih-chung; coloring by May E. Gu

Tzu Chi Events Around the World



Taiwan

To ensure students have safe learning environments, the Tzu Chi Foundation initiated Project Disaster Reduction in 2014. Its goal was to replace damaged or aged school buildings in Taiwan with new ones. San Min Junior High School, in Hualien County, eastern Taiwan, was one of 26 schools included in the project. The construction work at the school took 15 months and included a new three-story building, a covered basketball court, and other facilities. An inauguration ceremony for the new facilities was held on October 5, 2019.

Construction on the original San Min Junior High began in 1968 and was completed in 1969. After half a century, the main school building was old with leakage problems and exposed steel bars. Principal Zheng Jian-min (鄭健民), concerned about student safety, visited Master Cheng Yen in 2016 and expressed hope that Tzu Chi could help the school rebuild. Personnel from the founda-

Tzu Chi built a three-story building, a covered basketball court, and other facilities for San Min Junior High School in Hualien County, eastern Taiwan. The new construction was part of Project Disaster Reduction, initiated by the foundation to help ensure a safer learning environment for students at schools in Taiwan. An inauguration ceremony for the new facilities at San Min Junior High was held on October 5, 2019.

ZHENG QI-CONG

tion's construction department visited and evaluated the condition of the school. Eventually the decision was made to grant the principal's request for help.

Li Yu-ren (李裕仁), director of the Department of Education in Hualien County, was one of the guests attending the inauguration ceremony. He remarked, "Without a safe learning environment, there wouldn't be any learning at all." He thanked Tzu Chi for spending over NT\$830 million (US\$27 million) to construct new buildings for seven

schools in Hualien County. The foundation's aid was crucial given the financial constraints of the county government.

Lan Zuo-quan (藍作權) is a parent whose child is in ninth grade at the school and a member of the school baseball team. Lan said that the old school building posed risks. He was very grateful to Tzu Chi for building the new facilities for the school, thus saving him and other parents from worrying for the safety of their children.

Fan Gui-mei (范桂妹), 76, arrived at the school early in the morning of the ceremony to make snacks for attendees of the event. She said that she felt a special bond with the school because she lived next to it and because her eight grandchildren were all alumni. She visited the school twice a day during construction to check on its progress—it was like her own home being built. On this special day, she volunteered to make snacks for the guests.

Of the 26 schools included in Tzu Chi's Project Disaster Reduction, only two more remain to be finished. The entire project will come to a conclusion in 2020.

Australia

Tzu Chi volunteers in Australia conducted a two-day free dental clinic on September 28 and 29 at Blacktown Youth College, about 48 kilometers west of the Sydney central business district. This was the eighth year Tzu Chi had held such an event at the venue. The two-day event served a total of 110 patient visits.

Dr. Stephen Pak has volunteered at the annual event for eight years, and he has been the main organizer from the second year on. His two sons, Jeremy and Jordan, also served this year as dental assistants. Jeremy had volunteered five years before, when he was a high school student. That experience helped inspire him to become a dentist. A dental student now, he is set to graduate next year. He plans to join the free clinic every year after he becomes a dentist to serve more needy people.

Kim Lowe, a retired dental assistant, drove six hours from the town of Forbes to the college to volunteer. This was the first time she had taken part in the annual clinic. She first learned about Tzu Chi in 2018 during a severe drought in New South Wales. She helped connect volunteers with farmers who suffered from the drought, so the foundation could help them. When her husband died last year, volunteers also went to her home to offer condolences. Their love moved her so much that she immediately decided to volunteer her services when she heard of this event. She felt the free clinic was well organized, and she was very happy to participate in this meaningful event.

Matthew Ross was with the medical equipment company from which Tzu Chi rented the equipment for this event. Appreciating volunteers

In September 2019, Tzu Chi volunteers in Australia conducted a two-day free dental clinic at Blacktown Youth College in Bidwill, serving 110 patient visits.

PHOTO COURTESY OF TZU CHI AUSTRALIA



A volunteer hugs a child while distributing book bags and school supplies at a refugee camp in Sombor, Serbia.

SUSAN CHENG

for organizing the free clinics, he waived Tzu Chi's rental fees.

Serbia

In September, Tzu Chi volunteers in Europe visited Serbia again to conduct distributions to refugees in the country. They first gave out book bags and school supplies to children in three camps in Sombor, Krnjača, and Sid, then donated second-hand laptops to two refugee camps in Adaševci and Obrenovac.

Many refugees have been stuck in Serbia for a long time, unable to get to where they wanted to go. Some of them have school-age children. Serbia's Commissariat for Refugees and Migration has arranged for these children to attend local schools. Tzu Chi volunteers realized that these children would need school supplies for their education, so they have begun providing them with the needed items.

Nineteen families, 90 people in all, lived in the Sombor camp. This was the first time Tzu Chi volunteers had visited this place, so they first played games with the children there to break the ice. Tzu Chi volunteer Lin Zheng-zhong (林正中), from England, staged a puppet show to entertain the youngsters and share with them how to do recycling. Some children also tried their hand at manipulating the puppets. Then volunteers distributed book bags filled with school supplies to the children, and they hugged the youngsters and wished them the best.

Hassan, a teenager from Iraq, had lived in the Sombor camp for four months. He said he had been studying Serbian and English at school, and he liked the school very much. He used to put his school stuff in a folder since he didn't have a book bag, so he was very happy when he received one from Tzu Chi. "Thank you very much!" he exclaimed to the volunteers.

Volunteers visited the Krnjača refugee camp the following day, September 7. Children there greeted the volunteers warmly, as if meeting their own family.

Thirteen-year-old Shoaib was delighted to receive his bag, school supplies, and a small card with this aphorism by Master Cheng Yen printed on it: "Do good deeds and make good wishes each and every day." When he learned that donations from people around the world had made the gifts from Tzu Chi possible, he was very thankful and said that when he grew up, he would also help others in need.

The last distribution of school supplies was held at the Sid camp on September 8. Volunteers have visited the camp before, but it had been three months since their last visit. Like before, camp residents were very happy to see them again when they arrived. A couple in a family of five from Syria had lived in the camp for three months, and they kept thanking the volunteers for giving their children such practical gifts as the bags and school supplies.

On the 8th and 9th of September, volunteers donated 30 used laptops, courtesy of Delta Electronics, to the Adaševci and Obrenovac camps. Representatives from the company were present at the donation ceremonies too. Working with Tzu Chi, Delta Electronics has donated a total of 57 used laptops to five refugee camps in Serbia.

Parwiz Sadat, a resident at the Adaševci camp, used one of the donated laptops to contact his family via Facebook. He said he left home five months before and had missed his parents very much. He really wanted a good chat with them.

Tzu Chi volunteers in Europe have cared for refugees in Serbia since 2016 by providing them with clothes, mattresses, school supplies, food, and other items. More than material help, they hope to provide a caring presence for the refugees.

The United States

Caravans of Central American migrants have tried to enter the United States by way of Mexico since September 2018 but have been denied entry and left stranded in Tijuana, Mexico. Tzu Chi volunteers in the United States have been visiting two temporary migrant shelters to distribute food and other daily necessities to these vulnerable people.

There is a large turnover rate at the shelters, so volunteers often encounter different people during different visits.

Nevertheless, they still try to compile recipient rosters based on the number of people in each family and distribute aid accordingly.

One of their visits took place on September 7, 2019. When they were unloading goods in front of one of the shelters, a church volunteer recognized them and said to them with obvious emotion, "Are you from the Tzu Chi Foundation? You helped me graduate from college! When nobody would help me, you provided me with scholarships and helped me graduate from college." It turned out that this volunteer had once received assistance from Tzu Chi San Diego. Now he volunteers to help needy people at the U.S.-Mexico border.

Lan (a pseudonym) arrived in Tijuana from Honduras two weeks before. She said that her father had been killed by a criminal gang. To escape from danger, she took her oldest daughter and fled to Mexico. She went to San Diego for an interview, and told a judge why it was not safe for her to stay in Honduras. The judge scheduled another meeting with her on September 24. Lan was holding on to a glimmer of hope that she and her daughter would be admitted into America.

Shanna (a pseudonym) had fled from a violent husband in Guatemala with her three children,

Goods intended for migrants stranded at the U.S.-Mexico border are unloaded from a van. Many people from Central America have tried to seek asylum in the U.S. but are stranded at the U.S.-Mexico border. Tzu Chi volunteers from the United States have visited two shelters for these migrants to bring them food and other daily necessities.

HUANG YOU-BIN



ages three, six, and eight. They had traveled with a human-trafficking group but were caught by the border police and told that they couldn't enter America without legal documents. An immigration officer suggested that she send her eight-year-old son and six-year-old daughter back to Guatemala so that they could go to school, but she did not want to because they would be met again with violence from her husband. She and her children had been waiting in Tijuana for their chance for three months.

Time hangs heavy on these migrants' hands while they wait to have their futures decided. Church and charity group personnel play games with the children to keep them from getting bored. On the day of the Tzu Chi volunteers' visit, people from another charity group were leading some children in playing a game while personnel from a foundation were using a bus as a classroom to conduct classes for some children.

Volunteers brought enough food and daily necessities on this day for more than 300 people.

A Tzu Chi volunteer gives out aid at a September 19 distribution in Glendale, Mashonaland Central Province, Zimbabwe.

HLENGISILE JIYANE

They hoped to bring some warmth to these vulnerable people who were on their way to seek a better life.

Zimbabwe

A high inflation rate in Zimbabwe has caused prices of cooking oil and other basics to soar, making it even harder for destitute people to get by. Tzu Chi volunteers in that country carried out two distributions on September 13 and 19 to help families struggling with shortages of basic supplies.

The distribution on September 13 was held in the village of Domboshava, Mashonaland East Province. Many needy families in the village sell vegetables and hot food in the market, but still find it hard to make ends meet. The villagers who came to the distribution were mostly older people. Many of them were living with their grandchildren, who had lost their parents. Poverty had stopped these children from going to school.

Volunteers bowed deeply to participating families as they handed over supplies. This was to thank the families for giving them the opportunity to serve them. People broke into smiles upon receiving the much-needed supplies. They sang or



clapped their hands to express their gratitude to Tzu Chi.

Nine hundred and seventy-two families benefited from the distribution, with each household receiving supplies such as soap, cooking oil, and a ten-kilogram (22-pound) bag of rice.

The other distribution took place in Glendale, Mashonaland Central Province. Stabio Chimwara, a Tzu Chi volunteer who lives in the village, worked hard to organize the event. He reviewed the recipient list carefully to ensure that the distribution ran smoothly and that Tzu Chi's aid could get to the people that needed it most. The list was compiled with the help of several private organizations, including an association for people with disabilities. Chimwara personally visited recipient families to confirm those on the list. Sometimes he had to walk ten kilometers (6.2 miles) just to reach a family, but he was undaunted by the distance.

As typical with each distribution, volunteers introduced attendees to Tzu Chi and shared Master Cheng Yen's teachings with them. Volunteer Tambudzai Mufuka, from Harare, the capital of Zimbabwe, told everyone how her husband had abandoned her after she gave birth to a disabled child. She shared how she had pulled through that rough patch in her life with help from Tzu Chi volunteers, and she had even turned from an aid recipient to a help giver. She hoped her experience would inspire more people to give to others. Giving is a two-way street; both recipients and givers benefit in the process.

The distribution helped 670 households. Among the items provided were cooking oil and soap. These things were easily obtained in many places around the world, but they were precious items to these recipient families, who were therefore very grateful for Tzu Chi's help.

Canada

The Tzu Chi Burnaby office in Burnaby, British Colombia, held a street cleanup event on September 8 as part of the celebration of the office's first anniversary.

Volunteers in Burnaby have been serving their community since 1996, but they had never had an office. They'd had to borrow places such as volunteers' homes to use as venues for their events. They were in this awkward situation for more than 20 years until April 2018, when they were allowed to use a property of the city government by paying a token rent and management fees. After a few months of renovation, the office was

officially opened in September 2018. The office celebrated its first birthday this year.

On the day of the cleanup event, 72 volunteers gathered at the office at 9:30 a.m. Putting on gloves and picking up tongs and buckets, they divided into four teams and fanned out in four directions. The first team was assigned to pick up trash in the area surrounding an elementary school diagonally across from the Tzu Chi office. Volunteer Ma Ruo-qing (馬若晴) said, "Many cars that have driven past us honked their horns to convey their compliments to us. Some drivers even gave us a thumbs up. Many passersby also called out, 'Thank you!' to us. That really gave us motivation to work harder!"

Volunteer Liu Yi-rong (劉憶蓉) was with the third team. She had thought that there wouldn't be too much garbage to pick up since the streets looked pretty clean. Much to her surprise, however, she soon discovered a large pile of trash consisting of paper, newspaper, cups, cigarette butts, paper napkins, paper boxes, and chicken bones hidden in a bush. She could not even fit all the garbage into the bucket she was carrying.

Every team remarked that cigarette butts were the most common form of litter they encountered during their cleanup effort. This evoked feelings of remorse in volunteer Wang Shao-xiong (王少雄) because he used to toss his cigarette butts on the streets too. "I must thank Tzu Chi for changing me," he said. "I quit smoking after I joined Tzu Chi."

After one and a half hours' work, the four teams returned one after another to the office. Another celebratory activity was immediately kicked off with everyone singing the Tzu Chi song "One Family."

Part of the activity was looking back at what the branch office had accomplished in the past year. A video showed volunteers helping out at two food banks, sponsoring breakfast programs at eight schools, sweeping streets, providing daily necessities for homeless people, checking elementary school students for head lice, conducting winter aid distributions for low-income families, and visiting nursing homes, among other things. The establishment of a physical office even allowed volunteers to hold various courses for community residents.

Gathered around a large birthday cake, volunteers hoped that in the future the office will be able to serve more people, and that more people can join together to work for the good of society.



Directory of Tzu Chi Offices Worldwide

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We are connected like one big family. Therefore, love each other during peaceful times and help each other when calamities strike.

—Master Cheng Yen

PHOTO BY HUANG XIAO-ZHE