

慈濟

# Tzu Chi

## Buddhism in Action



### Serving the Needy in Jordan

September 2019



# Environmental Protection Starts With Everyone

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting



**A Tzu Chi volunteer works at the recycling point at her home. By reclaiming reusable resources, we can help the Earth become cleaner and more beautiful.**

HUANG XIAO-ZHE

Time constantly slips away. We should all make the best of our days to make positive differences in the world. That's why I'm always full of gratitude for people who give of themselves with love to better our world. One major issue that plagues the Earth today is garbage. Thankfully, many real-life bodhisattvas are doing what they can to address this issue; they take up recycling and try to inspire others to do the same to help our world become cleaner and better.

Many Tzu Chi volunteers from China came to Taiwan recently to attend a Tzu Chi training camp. During the closing ceremony, more than ten of them shared on stage how they had started doing recycling work. They said that after they joined Tzu Chi, they realized how important it is to protect the Earth and take care of our environment, so they took up recycling. Some of them are very successful in life, but they still roll up their sleeves and personally sort through garbage to reclaim reusable resources. Some have even provided venues to be used as recycling points in their communities so that more people can come together and do the Earth a good turn.

These volunteers took up recycling not because they had too much time on their hands; instead, they took up the work because they realized that the garbage problem was created by human beings and it is up to us to take care of it. They do their part and try to motivate others to do the same. They shared how they had carried out their work, including picking up garbage on the beach and in the mountains and carrying the garbage down the mountains with shoulder poles to recycle it.

Just like the volunteers from China, volunteers in Taiwan and many other countries are doing what they can to contribute to the good cause. They also share their experience to inspire others to pitch in.

Environmental protection is our collective responsibility. We must each do our part. Besides recycling, what else can we do to help reduce pollution? We can help cut down on the amount of garbage being produced by reducing consump-

tion. Excessive consumption is why the world is overwhelmed by trash. Let's call on everyone to rein in their desires and cherish what they have so that we can make a real dent on the amount of garbage being discarded.

Garbage is an issue affecting countries around the world. Take for example the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In its capital, Kinshasa, some waterways are so clogged up with garbage that people can cross them by stepping on the trash. In New Delhi, India, a rubbish mountain has grown so tall that it will soon be taller than the Taj Mahal [240 feet high]. This landfill is now so vast that India's Supreme Court has warned that red lights will have to be put on the top to warn aircraft.

Human beings really need to wake up to the magnitude of the garbage problem. Take a moment to ponder the vast quantities of toxic substances that are contained in even a single garbage dump. Whether we burn or bury the trash we produce, it is bound to cause pollution. It is therefore our inescapable responsibility to stop mindlessly creating garbage. As for the garbage that has already been thrown out, we should reclaim the part that can be recycled and allow it to be made into useful products. Recycled plastics, for example, can be made into paving blocks or high-end clothing material. If we are mindful, we can turn garbage into a reusable resource instead of letting it pollute the environment.

There is only one Earth, and it sustains billions of people. It has always done a good job of providing for us. However, because of the damage we have done to it, we are witnessing and experiencing water shortages, extreme weather events, and other sad consequences. We must awaken to the warnings the Earth has sent us and take action to protect and care for it before it is too late. Remember that one careless act of ours, however trivial we think it is, can harm the Earth. Environmental protection starts with every one of us. Let us work together so that our neighborhood, city, and the entire Earth can be clean and beautiful, and our world will be a better place to live. ☸



# Tzu Chi

Bimonthly

September 2019



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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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# The Impact of Garbage From Abroad

*China started banning the import of 24 types of solid waste in January 2018, causing some of the garbage to be diverted to Taiwan. It has had a substantial impact on the local recycling industry.*

By *Tzu Chi Monthly* editorial staff  
Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting  
Photos by Huang Xiao-zhe







A worker operates a forklift at a paper recycling facility.



If you strike up a conversation with owners of Taiwanese recycling businesses, big and small, about how the recycling industry on the island has been doing lately, you'll probably hear, "The prices have been really bad lately, especially for paper."

The nosedive in prices started in early 2018, but they're not the only thing impacting the recycling industry—stricter scrutiny is also being applied to the recyclables that individual scavengers are bringing to recycling businesses for sale. In the past, cardboard, scrap paper, and paper drink containers could be lumped together for sale, but now only properly sorted paper

**Government sanitation workers collect garbage from households. Not all recyclable garbage picked up by a recycling truck is guaranteed to be recycled. A lot of challenges have to be overcome before a piece of recyclable waste can gain a new lease on life.**

products stand a chance of being accepted and purchased.

These changes have occurred as a result of China imposing stricter restrictions on imported waste. Once the world's largest importer of foreign waste, China banned 24 kinds of scraps in January 2018, including unsorted paper and polyethylene terephthalate (commonly abbreviated as "PET") used in plastic bottles. The bans sent waste exporters such as Japan, the United States, and Europe scrambling for a substitute for China. As a result, some of the trash was diverted to other Southeast Asian regions in the proximity of China, including Taiwan.

Paper and plastics made up the majority of the garbage that was diverted to Taiwan. According to customs statistics, the amount of waste plastics imported during the first half of 2018 came to about 240,000 tons, 2.6 times higher than the amount imported in the same period in 2017.



**Individual scavengers deliver their recyclables to recycling dealerships and have the garbage weighed there.**

Imported scrap paper totaled 770,000 tons, 1.3 times higher than before.

The recycling from abroad impacted the local recycling industry, causing prices for various recyclable materials to plummet. Waste paper was the most badly affected; the price dropped from five Taiwanese dollars (US\$0.17) per kilogram in 2017 to one or two Taiwanese dollars in 2018. There has been an environmental impact as well: Mixed in with the imported recycling was a lot of nonrecyclable waste, which unavoidably added to environmental pollution in Taiwan.

#### **A big headache**

A great variety of recyclables could be seen piled high on the empty lots at a recycling business in Xinzhuang, New Taipei City. There was a separate pile for each type of recyclable, including separate piles for metals, plastics, PET bottles, paper, and electronic appliances. Paper, which made up the bulk of the reclaimable refuse, had been sorted into several categories.

Qiu, the owner of the recycling facility, had been in the trade for over a decade. He said that he mostly dealt in waste paper and that "the garbage from abroad" had made quite an impact on him. He was suffering from financial losses as a

result of reduced prices, but the stockpiles of the goods he hadn't been able to sell was giving him an even bigger headache. "I used to be able to sell 500 tons to paper mills, but that has come down to 300 tons," he lamented. "I've had no choice but to stockpile the remaining 200 tons."

Since the price for waste paper from abroad had dropped drastically, local paper mills had turned to that source for their purchases. Waste

#### **A Note on Garbage From Abroad**

**China used to process at least half of the world's exports of waste paper, metals, and plastics, but in 2018, the nation started implementing a ban on the import of 24 kinds of solid waste in the name of protecting the environment and improving public health. Beijing declared that large amounts of dirty or even hazardous wastes had been mixed in the solid waste that entered China, seriously polluting the country's environment.**

**After the ban went into effect, trash was diverted to Southeast Asian countries such as Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam. As a countermeasure to the flooding of refuse into their countries, these nations began putting restrictions on the import of garbage too. In October 2018, Taiwan reduced the import of certain types of waste paper and plastics to under 0.5 percent.**



paper produced locally had nowhere to go as a result, leading to the surplus.

Zhang was another recycling merchant facing the same dilemma as Qiu. Unlike Qiu, Zhang dealt in plastics. His recycling facility, located in Banqiao, New Taipei City, was big and set up with sorting lines. A group of female workers stood in line beside conveyor belts, sorting plastics. Besides PET bottles and other plastic containers and packaging, there were items that shouldn't have appeared on the conveyor belts, such as waste paper, metal cans, and paper containers.

"Most of the recyclables that end up in my place are mixed with other impurities," Zhang declared. "A bag can contain many types of waste." He explained that the sources of his recy-

**It is difficult to recycle plastic containers like the ones photographed here. Many become garbage after being used only once.**

clables were not individual scavengers, but small-scale recycling dealerships and charity groups. Except for recyclables from Tzu Chi, those from other sources were often not properly sorted. That's why he had to hire so many employees to work the sorting lines.

On an empty lot in his facility stood a row of "plastic walls" made of compressed plastics. Zhang said the impact from imported waste was smaller on plastic containers such as PET bottles or milk jugs because the Taiwanese government subsidized the businesses that recycled these kinds of garbage. Other sorts of plastic waste were another story. There used to be facilities that took those other kinds of garbage, but due to the impact of waste from abroad, very few recycling processing facilities now took them.

Some of the unwanted plastic waste was made of mixed materials. For example, though the main material used to make the disposable containers

that are often used to package tomatoes is PET, other materials are mixed in as well. With cheaper sources from abroad now available, processing businesses naturally don't want to spend extra money to sort and process this kind of plastic.

"Even if you gave them the plastics for free, they wouldn't take it," Zhang said. He added that if the situation did not improve, he would have to send the plastics currently stockpiled at his place away to be buried or incinerated. He's simply running out of space.

### Hard-working volunteers

Some people in Taiwan give their recyclables to individual scavengers, smaller recycling dealerships, or Tzu Chi recycling stations, but most let government sanitation workers take care of their household garbage, both recyclable and nonrecyclable. City or county governments then call for bids from recycling businesses interested in buying the collected recyclables. Bid winners sort their purchased recyclables more thoroughly and then turn around and sell them to paper, plastics, or metal processing factories.

Due to the steep fluctuations in recycling prices in recent years and the rise of labor costs, some recycling businesses have chosen to stockpile their goods and wait for the prices to rise again. Others take a different course. Last year, for example, when the price for paper hit rock bottom, some waste paper dealers opted out of the bidding process held by the New Taipei City government. Not participating at all was their way to cut down on possible losses.

Another consequence of the decrease in recycling prices is the stricter demands recycling businesses now place on the quality of the reclaimable garbage brought to them. Take paper for example. Paper containers used to be lumped together with scrap paper for sale, but now that paper mills are demanding that they be separated, recycling businesses have no choice but to do so. Scrap paper goes to paper mills and paper containers to recycling facilities. The recycling facilities can then separate the plastic lining from paper containers so that the items can be reused.

These stricter demands from recycling businesses have not had much of an impact on Tzu Chi recycling stations. That's because volunteers have always been thorough in sorting the recyclables that end up at the stations.

The Tzu Chi Sanchong Recycling Station, in New Taipei City, is located right next to the Tzu Chi Sanchong Jing Si Hall (a Tzu Chi activity cen-



**A volunteer removes the ring from the neck of a PET bottle. The ring and cap of a PET bottle are made of a different material from the bottle itself. They need to be removed and recycled separately.**

ter). On this day, volunteer Wu Lian-zhen (吳連臻) was sorting plastics other than plastic bags and PET bottles. She dexterously separated the plastic items that went through her hands into three categories. Practice makes perfect, and she could usually separate the plastics into their respective categories by mere touch.

Many Tzu Chi recycling stations in the greater Taipei area deliver their PET and glass bottles to the Sanchong station for further disposal. Glass bottles sorted by color—clear, amber, and green—could be seen piled on an empty lot at the station. Off to the side were PET bottles, milk jugs, and rigid plastics. Each area was chock-full





of recyclables.

Ye Ming-zhu (葉明珠), a senior recycling volunteer, said that last year recycling dealers began implementing more rigorous standards for the recyclables delivered to them. Take glass bottles for example. Dealers used to take them mixed by color, but now they have to be sorted into three colors. PET bottles and milk jugs have to be separated by color too.

Volunteers don't fear the hard work required to separate the items. What they fear instead is that their recyclables are rejected by dealers and end up being burned or landfilled, damaging Taiwan's environment as a result.

**Many recyclables haven't been properly sorted before they are delivered to Tzu Chi recycling stations. Volunteers first roughly divide them into bottles and cans, paper and plastics before sorting them more thoroughly.**



**Saving reusable resources**

Jiang Mei-xiu (江美秀), a volunteer at the Zhonggang Recycling Station in New Taipei City, held a chart in her hand. The chart listed in detail the categories of recyclables the station handles, the prices for them, and the dealers the recyclables are sent to. A wide variety of recyclables were included: paper, metals, plastics, light bulbs, batteries, etc.—over 140 items in total.

It is a fact known in the recycling industry that the more thoroughly and finely sorted your recyclables are, the easier you can weather changes in the market. Despite that, Jiang mentioned that very few dealers now take plastic sheets made of PP (polypropylene) and PS (polystyrene). This is due to the large imports of garbage in 2018.

PP and PS plastic sheets are omnipresent in daily life. Take the clear containers often used to package fruit, cake, or other kinds of food. They

are all but regarded as garbage in the recycling market. Because they are small and light, a large amount has to be accumulated before it can be delivered to be processed. Accumulating such large amounts also means it is easy for different materials to be mixed in it. What's more, because they are often used to contain food and beverages, they are often sticky and dirty after use. They need to be cleaned before they can be recycled. Because the process of reclaiming them is so troublesome and the resulting profits so low, it is small wonder that few recycling businesses are willing to take them.

Plastic bags face the same situation. They are, like the plastic containers mentioned above,

**A volunteer takes cassette tapes apart to reclaim reusable components. With cassette tapes going the way of the dinosaurs, many have ended up being thrown away.**



“personae non gratae” in the recycling market. Despite that, some Tzu Chi recycling stations still take them.

If you visit the Zhonggang Recycling Station, you will most likely see a lot of plastic bags being air-dried on the third floor. Jiang said that all of those bags have been collected from fruit and vegetable markets and have been used to package guavas. They have to be sorted, cleaned, and air-dried before they can be delivered to dealers. Reclaimed plastic bags have to be heated and melted before they can be made into new products. If recycled bags contain any moisture when they are heated, explosions are likely to happen. To avoid this danger, recycling businesses request that recycled materials be cleaned and air-dried before they are processed. Only with that extra work is it possible for bags to be recycled instead of ending up in an incinerator or a landfill.





### **Making the life of things last as long as possible**

Du Xu Jin-zhu (杜許錦珠) sat in a corner at the Zhonggang station, scraping sticky paper tags with a knife from some clear plastic casing and then putting the items into a large bag in front of her. She was so fast it looked like she had been at this for years. “All foreign objects must be removed from the recyclables so that it will be easier for the dealers to process them later,” she commented.

Then she threw what she was handling on the floor. She smiled and said that the noise it made hitting the floor told her the piece of casing was made of #5 rigid plastic.

There are many older volunteers like Du at Tzu Chi recycling stations who, thanks to their years of experience in recycling, can tell by touch or sound into which category to sort a piece of plastic—PS, PC (polycarbonate), etc.

Jiang Mei-xiu pointed out that sorting recyclables isn’t as easy as it looks. Owing to the wide range of materials involved, sorting can become quite complicated. “When we first started, we even asked recycling dealers to give us lessons on how to sort,” she said.

Picking up a broken remote control, Jiang illustrated the benefits of meticulous sorting: “This is a discarded remote control. No one wants it. But if you take it apart and divide its components into different categories, they will be of use again.”

The remote control consisted of parts like the plastic casing, computer chips, and copper wiring, with the last item being the most valuable. If not taken apart, the remote was just a piece of garbage, but if dismantled, its various components could become reusable resources again. It served as an excellent example of this maxim: “There is no real garbage—only misplaced resources.”

Disassembling items like the remote control is among the work that volunteers at Tzu Chi recycling stations do. Their patience is necessary to transform useless objects into reusable resources. But not all recyclable items have to be meticulous-

**A volunteer at a Tzu Chi recycling station in Banqiao, New Taipei City, cleans plastic bags with recycled water before recycling them. Taiwan uses over ten billion plastic bags every year, and many are carelessly discarded or sent to incinerators. Volunteers patiently salvage them to lessen their impact on the environment.**

ly taken apart and sorted. Take PET bottles. Though their caps, main bodies, and labels are made of different materials, all you need to do is to detach the caps from the bottles—the labels should be left on.

“The recycling of PET bottles is subsidized by the government recycling fund,” Jiang said, “and people need the labels to confirm that.” She further explained that the manufacturers that make this kind of bottle have to pay the government a recycling fee to be put toward the recycling fund, and the labels on the bottles contain that information.

However, some recyclables, no matter how carefully sorted, are rejected by recycling businesses. Second-hand clothing is an example. Jiang said that people these days change their wardrobes so fast a large quantity of used clothes are turned out. Donating them to charity groups isn’t the solution because the amount needed by charity groups is limited. Supply has exceeded demand in other countries too, so sending the clothing abroad isn’t an option either. Recycling of second-hand clothes is an issue that people in Taiwan are having to face.

### **Reduce consumption**

Many factors influence what items recycling dealers take and their profit margins, but no matter the fluctuations in the recycling market, Tzu Chi recycling volunteers keep at their work, day in and day out. They stick to their posts and do a thorough job, doing their best to keep recyclable resources from ending up in incinerators as much as possible.

Though Taiwan boasts a recycling rate of over 50 percent, a lot of recyclable items are still discarded as garbage. Even entering the recycling system doesn’t guarantee that an item will be recycled. Only those things that are properly cleaned and sorted can fight all the way through to rebirth. Mixed and dirty materials meet their end in a garbage dump.

Despite all this talk about recycling, we need to remember that recycling is still the last of the 5Rs of environmental protection, coming after refuse, reduce, reuse, and repair. Curb your desires. Reduce consumption. Refrain from using single-use items. Through small, consistent acts, we can make the world a little bit better at a time.

(Information provided by Liu Xuan-yu)





# Guided by Compassion

## Serving the Needy in Jordan

**By Lin Ling-li**

Compiled and translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Photos by Wang Jin

*How do they find impoverished Bedouin people and Syrian refugees scattered across the deserts in Jordan? It's as if a GPS had been implanted into their heads—wherever needy people are, they find them. They never get lost in the vast expanses of arid desert.*

Volunteer Chen Chiou Hwa can always locate needy Bedouin people and Syrian refugees spread across the deserts of Jordan who are receiving aid from Tzu Chi.

HUANG XIAO-ZHE





**I**n 1997, Tzu Chi volunteers began carrying out charity work in Jordan, helping needy people in the country and refugees from the Middle East. After the Syrian Civil War erupted in 2011, the local Tzu Chi chapter also began rendering aid to Syrian refugees who had escaped to Jordan. How does a Buddhist organization like Tzu Chi carry out philanthropic work in a Muslim country? Master Cheng Yen's words serve as a good guidance: "Remove all human-created barriers such as skin color, nationality, and religion, and leave only love in your heart."

In May of this year, just before and during the month of Ramadan, volunteers in Jordan spent two weeks traveling across the country and distributing aid to over 2,000 families. More than 10,000 people benefited from their efforts. Aid

**Volunteers visit single mother Hlala and her family after a distribution. Sitting in an open shelter and sipping Arabic style coffee and black tea served by Hlala's children, the volunteers enjoyed the warm hospitality of the Bedouin people.**

recipients included impoverished Bedouins, Syrian refugees, and other people receiving long-term aid from the foundation. I was on a Tzu Chi delegation from Taiwan that participated in the distributions. From May 1 to 14, we witnessed how our Tzu Chi family in Jordan gave love to the underserved in the country which some have called "an oasis of peace in the Middle East."

Much of Jordan is covered by desert. Volunteers in the nation often have to travel through desert terrain to visit the needy.

Oftentimes, there are no road signs to guide them. Despite that, Chen Chiou Hwa (陳秋華), the head of Tzu Chi Jordan, seemed to have a GPS implanted in his head and is always able to locate the Bedouin people and Syrian refugees who are receiving aid from Tzu Chi spread across the deserts. He has never been known to lose his way.

On May 2, we traveled south from Amman, Jordan's capital, to hold a series of distributions in Al Abasyiah, Al Thaghr, and Wadi Feynan. In three days, we distributed aid to 250 Bedouin families. The aid included rice, sugar, cooking oil, lentils, tea, dates, date spread, sesame spread, and other essential items.

#### **A cup of tea**

Tzu Chi Jordan's connection with Wadi Feynan started in 2002. That year, Princess Sumaya bint Hassan of Jordan, the daughter of Prince El Hassan bin Talal, visited the poor in the region.

**Tzu Chi conducted a distribution in Wadi Feynan on May 4, benefiting 155 families.**

When she returned home from the trip, she phoned Chen Chiou Hwa, crying as she said, "People there are so poor! Could you go there and take a look? I'll ask my driver to take you there." A couple of days later, Chen and a fellow volunteer, Abu Thomas, went to Wadi Feynan as requested by the princess and saw for themselves the hard lives people there were leading. That's how Tzu Chi began helping people in the area.

I met Fatima at the distribution held at a school in Wadi Feynan on May 4. She was garbed in black from head to toes, showing only her eyes. People had told me I couldn't photograph Muslim women, so even though I was very curious about her, I lowered my camera.

Fatima nodded at me, her eyes showing goodwill. Then she turned around, facing away from the square, and indicated that I could photograph her from the front. I understood her meaning; she was telling me that as long as the men in her family didn't see it, it was okay for me to take pictures of her. After I had photographed her, we started talking, she in Arabic and me in Mandarin





Chinese. Along with our body language, we seemed to communicate okay. We agreed that I would escort her home after she had received her aid supplies.

Fatima received 25 kgs (55 pounds) of goods. I walked over to her and took some of the goods from her to ease her burden. Then we headed together towards her home. When we arrived, a goat approached her and bit into a plastic bag containing some of the supplies. Fatima hit the goat with her hand, as if she was disciplining a naughty child in her family. Then she flashed a shy smile at me.

Walking into her tent, I looked around and wondered where she was going to store her supplies. There was no furniture, no obvious place to store the goods. In the world where I came from, we put our rice in a rice bin, sugar in a sugar jar, and sesame spread in the refrigerator. In her world, in a tent devoid of any furniture, where to store the goods seemed to be completely irrelevant.

A neighbor came to us and asked if I'd like to have some coffee or tea. I smiled at her, thanking her for her hospitality. Fatima's "living room,"

which was right outside the tent, consisted of four poles covered by some flattened cardboard boxes and dry hay. The boxes were probably from a previous Tzu Chi distribution.

I suddenly remembered what volunteer Chen had told us, that it wasn't as environmentally unfriendly as we'd think to use plastic bags to contain our relief supplies. The bags would be recycled for new uses by the aid recipients. The villagers, for example, usually put their clothes in the bags and hang them up to protect the garments from dust.

Fatima's living room was crude and makeshift, but it provided good shelter from the hot sun. She asked me to have a seat there. I had been exposed to the sun all morning, so I found it very cool and comfortable sitting in the open structure. Fatima took out a big cup, rinsed it with a little water, filled it up with water, and carefully handed it to me.

I was so touched at that moment—I knew water was hard to come by in the desert. I took out my water bottle, told her I had brought my own water, and pushed the cup back to her. Only then did she cheerfully drain the cup herself. That must have been her first chance to have any water during the entire morning.

Because of Fatima's hospitality and generosity, I felt as if a nourishing stream was flowing through my heart.

#### Hlala and her children

There were many barefoot children at the distribution site. Born in Taiwan in the 1960s, I was familiar with the sight; children going barefoot were common in the countryside of Taiwan back when I was small. However, the environment in Taiwan was far friendlier to shoeless kids. Here in the desert, I wondered how kids could manage to walk around on hot sand and "foot-unfriendly" gravel without the protection of footwear. I felt like asking the youngsters: "In the desert, with

**A child breaks into a bright smile as he carries on his head a bag of rice distributed by Tzu Chi.**



**Hlala (middle) has had to bring up seven children on her own. Tzu Chi volunteers help her children go to school. After many years of interaction, she and her children are now like family to the volunteers.**

the temperature so high, every piece of rock is hot enough to bake flatbread. If you're attending school but have no shoes to wear, how can you possibly cross the desert to school?"

Hlala was another aid recipient I met at the distribution. She was a single mother with seven children. Her husband had left her for another woman, leaving her to support their children alone. With such a heavy burden, she had a hard time sending her children to school. Tzu Chi stepped in after learning about the family's situation.

Aided by scholarships provided by the foundation, Hlala's oldest daughter, Tahanai, graduated from college last year and was now happily married. Hlala's second child, Mohamad, started receiving Tzu Chi scholarships when he was 13. He was in college now. "After I graduate, I'll come back here and be a teacher," he said.

A younger brother of theirs was also receiving Tzu Chi scholarships. He had dark skin, deep-set facial features, and wavy hair. If he couldn't go to school like his sister and brother, he'd be like many other Bedouins in the area, herding animals and roaming the wasteland barefoot. He would probably be here his entire life, unable to climb out of the poverty that had bound generation after generation of his fellow nomad people.





**Volunteers have a fun time with local children at the distribution site in Wadi Feynan.**

Hlala brought four of her children to help at the distribution. When the event came to an end, several volunteers and I went home with them. Like at Fatima's place, we were invited to sit in an open shelter. And like at Fatima's place, I felt the warm hospitality of the Bedouin people. We listened to Chen Chiou Hwa recount his history with the family, as we sipped Arabic style coffee and black tea that Hlala's children served us.

"I feel like I'm visiting family every time I come here," Chen said. "We go back a long way. We've seen kids in the family grow from little ones to adults over the years." Chen recalled that when Tahanai first left home to attend college, he asked Hlala, "How much money did you give her?" She said 12 Jordanian dinar (US\$17). "Was that for transportation only?" Chen asked again.

"That was for transportation and a week's meals," She replied.

"How could she possibly live on so little money?" Chen exclaimed in surprise.

Hlala told him that her daughter even came home with two dinar left. Chen was shocked at the answer. Among his circle of acquaintances, the smallest tip some gave was ten dinar.

When volunteers learned that Tahanai needed a computer, they obtained one for her. Chen and another volunteer, Abeer Aglan M. Madanat, took the computer to her school. When they visited Tahanai in her dormitory, they saw that all she had on her bed was a blanket distributed by Tzu Chi. Her meals each day consisted of flatbread her family had made and tomatoes they had picked.

Tahanai was overjoyed to see Chen and Abeer, saying she would treat them to a meal in a restau-



**Children walk across an expanse of desert. Without education, it'd be difficult for them to break free from the cycle of poverty that has trapped generations of local nomad people.**

LIN LING-LI

rant. Chen said, "Let's just have some tomatoes here," but Tahanai retorted, "I have tomatoes every day!" As a result, they finally ended up eating in a restaurant—but Chen insisted on footing the bill. Tahanai ordered the cheapest item on the menu: a sandwich that cost one dinar. "She loved the sandwich," Chen recalled. "She kept saying to me, 'This is so delicious!'"

"That was her first time eating in a restaurant," Chen continued. He said he still vividly remembered the scene that day.

Chen recollected another episode connected to the family. One time he and other volunteers went to visit Wadi Feynan, but their vehicle couldn't

get into the area because of some flooding. "In the end, Hlala, carrying two pots of food, walked five kilometers [3 miles] from her home just to see us," Chen said.

At this point, Hlala brought out a freshly baked flatbread and served it to us. It had to be at least the size of a washbasin and was big enough for everyone present to share.

My heart was filled with warm feelings, and I felt cheerful. "Ah!...the black tea was so sweet, the coffee so aromatic, and the flatbread so yummy," I thought to myself, very satisfied.

### **Two-kilometer-long water pipes**

After we said goodbye to Hlala and her family, our vehicle traveled across an area where we could see a long stretch of water pipes installed by Tzu Chi for the local people. The pipes were two kilometers long, bringing water to villagers

from a water source located somewhere up in the local mountains. If we followed the pipes, we would return to the school where we had held the distribution. Though the weather was perpetually hot, water ran down the pipes, past Hlala's home and past the school. Thanks to the pipelines, local villagers could save money from buying water.

Our volunteers in Jordan, despite their small number, have done what they can over the years to aid the underserved. They help children go to school, ease people's lives by providing them with material supplies, and help refugees receive medical treatment. They don't just give help one time; they provide long-term support to those in need. They persist at their missions, day after day, year after year. Love and compassion know no bounds. They will continue to bring love and hope to people's lives. ❀



# Thus I Saw and Experienced

*A plastic surgeon, a Chinese medicine doctor, and a pharmacist shared their experiences of volunteering at Tzu Chi free medical clinics in May 2019 in Mozambique.*



A scene at a Tzu Chi free clinic held at the Catholic University of Mozambique in Beira

HUANG SHI-ZE



# Healing the Land That Nurtures Me

By Xie Ming-fang

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Photo by Cai Kai-fan

*When it comes to transforming lives, education is a very important step. Only with a successful education will people have the ability to prevent diseases and do other things to change their countries for the better.—Honda Hsu, M.D., Department of Plastic Surgery, Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital*

The weather was a little cool when he woke up in the morning. A light breeze wafted the smell of burning wood to him and warmed his heart. “That smells so familiar,” said Dr. Honda Hsu (許宏達). “I’m home.”

Hsu immigrated to South Africa from Taiwan when he was eight. He went to school and later practiced medicine there too. He returned to Taiwan when he was nearly 30 years old, but because his formative years and early adulthood were spent in South Africa, he always thought of himself as a South African.

Now, 20 years after having moved back to Taiwan, he again stepped onto the soil of Africa, the land that had nurtured and nourished him. Back on the African continent, his childhood memories flooded back to him. It wasn’t South Africa to which he returned this time, but Mozambique. Even so, the familiar aroma of burning wood—a common smell in Africa—brought on a rush of homesickness.

Hsu was in Mozambique to participate in several free clinic events that Tzu Chi was holding for survivors of Cyclone Idai. “The land of Africa gave me so much, and yet I can only repay it a little,” he said. He thanked his colleagues at Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital, in southern Taiwan, for changing shifts with him so that he could take part in this medical mission.

His heart ached for the local people as he volunteered at the free clinic sites. It had been 20 years since he had left Africa, and yet residents there were still plagued by many of the same contagious diseases, such as AIDS. Hsu believed that inadequate basic education was the culprit. Without a proper understanding of the diseases and the hygienic conditions required to prevent their spread, such infectious diseases would always be present. He had noticed, for instance, that many African residents suffer from sexually transmitted diseases, while people in Taiwan rare-

ly do. He reasoned that this was likely the result of inadequate education.

“About 40 percent of the population in Africa are children,” Hsu noted. “We need to start by educating these children to bring about a positive change; only with a successful education will they have the ability to prevent the spread of infectious diseases.”

It takes a long-term plan to transform Africa. “Master Cheng Yen has decided to build schools there—this is a very important first step,” Hsu commented. He sincerely hopes that every child in Africa can have access to education so that they can change their countries for the better.

## Deciding not to become a pediatrician

Hsu couldn’t communicate directly with his patients at the free clinics due to the language barrier. Thankfully, local medical students served as interpreters and bridged the gap. There was such a huge turnout of patients every day that a doctor specializing in one area of medicine had to see patients seeking help in other areas too. Though Hsu is a plastic surgeon, he saw patients coming for services in internal medicine, surgery, OB/GYN, or pediatrics as well. Hsu was glad that he had the experience of practicing in South Africa and so he had no difficulty attending to the various needs of the patients that came to him.

On the first day of their free clinic service, a five-year-old girl showed up with a cut next to her brow. A friend had accidentally hit her with a stone when they were playing. Hsu and other medical professionals treated the girl and stitched up the cut. The girl barely registered a reaction when a shot of anesthesia was administered to anesthetize the area to be sewn up. “A shot of anesthesia is actually quite painful, but she didn’t even cry,” Hsu said, “and she was very cooperative when we sewed her up. She was really brave.” The physician declared that if it were his



daughter going through the same procedure, she would have wailed and howled uncontrollably. He was impressed by the resilience of African children and their willingness to submit to what came their way.

Hsu’s heart grew heavy when he saw some children with large bellies. He said that all they had to eat was cornmeal, a local staple food. A diet like that over time leads to malnutrition and a deficiency of protein. As a result, fluid builds up in the abdomen, giving rise to an expanded belly.

The sight of these children brought to his mind an incident that had happened to him when he was an intern in South Africa. One time he went to the countryside to serve, and a child that was just skin and bones was delivered to them to treat. Early one morning, a nurse came to him in a panic and told him the child had stopped breathing. Everyone rushed to give the child first aid. The attending physician came too, but then he just said, “No need to save him.” “Why?” Hsu asked in puzzlement. “He died of starvation,” came the reply.

The attending physician’s reply induced in Hsu a profound sadness. Having always loved children, he decided right then not to become a pediatrician. “Because there wasn’t really much we could do for them.” Thinking back on this episode, Hsu’s eyes grew red with tears.

After he returned to Taiwan from Africa, Hsu worked at Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital, in eastern Taiwan, before transferring to Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital, where he still works. Besides working at those hospitals, he often volunteered at free clinics and conducted home visits to the needy too. About serving the underprivileged, he humbly states: “I’m just doing what I should do.”

Hsu had taken part in Tzu Chi free clinics in Indonesia, China, and other places, but that trip to Mozambique felt very different to him. “I felt I was going home to serve people in the land that had nurtured me.” When he heard Master Cheng Yen’s pledge to transform the lives of Africans, he decided he would always do what he could to support this meaningful undertaking.



# Providing Stimuli, Enhancing Healing

By Zhang Li-yun

Abridged and translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Photos by Cai Kai-fan

*Acupuncture, cupping therapy, and gua sha (scraping the skin to cause tissue damage) work by enhancing the body's ability to repair itself by causing slight disturbances to the body. It's just like delivering aid to Mozambique after it was hit by Cyclone Idai. The most important thing is to awaken the land's ability to heal itself by providing stimuli to it.—Dr. Cheng I-che, Department of Traditional Chinese Medicine, Taichung Tzu Chi Hospital*

This was the first time that most members of the Tzu Chi medical team who went to Mozambique to provide free clinics for victims of Cyclone Idai had practiced medicine in Africa. Cyclone Idai not only caused heavy losses of human lives and property, but also a surge of infectious diseases in Mozambique. The prevalence of AIDS and tuberculosis further added to the challenges faced by the medical volunteers. Everyone was therefore extra careful and on their toes.

Many specialties were covered in the free clinics, and there was an abundant supply of medicine and nutritional supplements too. However, the medical conditions the doctors encountered at the venues spanned such a weird and wild range that the western medicine available was unable to cope with them all. Fortunately, traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) treatments filled in where western medicine fell short.

Many Mozambicans had never seen a doctor in their entire lives, not to mention a TCM doctor. How would they react when they saw a long acupuncture needle being pushed into them? Dr. Cheng I-che (鄭宜哲), from the Department of Traditional Chinese Medicine, Taichung Tzu Chi Hospital, in central Taiwan, had his way of handling patients' fear of the treatment. He had participated in Tzu Chi free clinic services in Sri Lanka before, and his experiences there helped him treat reluctant patients in Mozambique.

Actually, at first the most frightened and nervous people weren't the patients, but the college students who were interpreting for Cheng. They kept asking him, "Shouldn't we explain to the patient first what you're going to do to him/her?" Doing so had occurred to Cheng, but then he had second thoughts. After all, fear of acupuncture is not limited to people unfamiliar with this kind of

treatment; even those who know acupuncture can be unnerved by it too.

In Taiwan, when medical workers are giving patients a shot, they often tell them to take a deep breath. Faced with African patients who didn't speak the same language as he did, Cheng resorted to saying, "One—two—three" to mentally prepare them before applying a needle as fast as he could.

To reduce the patient's anxiety, Cheng would first apply needles to places out of their line of vision. He would also go first for the acupuncture points that usually hurt less when a needle is applied. Doing so would gently ease the patient into the experience. When the patient was more comfortable with the treatment, he then moved on to the areas that were more likely to unnerve them or hurt more. If a patient had an insurmountable fear of needles, he tried to cut down on the number that he used.

Although some people are so afraid of needles that acupuncture triggers reactions like nausea, dizziness, or panic, Cheng's patients responded well to the treatment. "I administered acupuncture to nearly 200 people during the four free clinics, and no one felt unwell due to fear of the treatment," he said.

## The mysteries of the human body

Mozambique is not an English-speaking country, and so the Tzu Chi medical team, coming from Taiwan, the United States, and Australia, had to rely on local college or medical school students to interpret for them. Many of the students asked Cheng how acupuncture works, especially after they saw a fair number of patients who had come to the clinic looking very unwell leave with smiles on their faces.

Cheng answered by first asking the students, "Can a country be powerful if its rich people are



Dr. Cheng I-che gives acupuncture treatment to a patient under a mango tree at the Tzu Chi Home in Maputo.

ZHANG MEI-LING

very rich but poor people very poor?"

"No!" the students replied.

Cheng continued: "How then can we make this country more powerful? Is it by asking the rich people to reach out and help the underprivileged? This is how acupuncture works in the human body."

The doctor explained that under normal circumstances it is difficult for acupuncture to produce extra energy for the body. Instead, acupuncture works by taking advantage of the body's own resources; it induces the flow of *qi* (often translated as "energy") to boost the body's natural healing abilities. It reminds the body that some part of it is having issues, and it thus triggers the body's ability to repair itself. Acupuncture can also move *qi* from one area of the body to another in order to help the healing.

Many other TCM treatment methods work the same way—for example, cupping therapy, *gua sha* (scraping the skin to cause tissue damage), and bloodletting. On the surface these treatment methods look like they cause damage to the body, but in reality they enhance the body's ability to heal itself by causing slight disturbances to the body.

Cheng further explained that cupping therapy and *gua sha* might damage capillaries on the surface of the skin, but at the same time the body's immune system and white blood vessels are quickly activated to repair the damage and help stiff muscles become softer. The oxygen contained in the blood that flows to the brain increases, which makes a person feel instantly refreshed and energized.

Cheng said that it was like Mozambique being hit by Cyclone Idai. Though the storm caused damage to the country, it also brought in help from Europe, the United States, or even Taiwan, which are thousands of miles away. This outside help worked like acupuncture, cupping therapy, or *gua sha*; it helped the land heal itself by provid-





place to store the fruit that had been harvested from the trees. If people wanted any of the apricots, they could bring him rice in exchange for the fruit. Dong would then give the rice to people in need.

Cheng found a parallel between this story and that of Denise Tsai (蔡岱霖). Tsai, originally from Taiwan, moved to Mozambique after she married a Mozambican. She was the first Tzu Chi volunteer in the country. Spreading the Great Love spirit espoused by Master Cheng Yen to people in Mozambique, she has inspired many to join Tzu Chi and do charity work. Symbolically, it is like a single bodhi seed—Tsai—has

led to the formation of a large forest of bodhi trees. [The bodhi tree is an important icon in Buddhism. The Buddha is believed to have attained enlightenment under a bodhi tree.]

Cheng said that the free clinics were opportunities to trigger more “energy” for this country. He hoped that the next time he visits, the ranks of people who have joined in to do good will have grown even larger.

**There are more than ten dialects in Mozambique. Over a hundred college students volunteered to interpret for the Tzu Chi doctors at the four free clinics. This afforded Dr. Cheng with a good opportunity to share ideas and talk about Tzu Chi with local young people.**

ing stimuli. Tzu Chi’s aid to the country has, for example, brought forth an outpouring of native volunteers. These volunteers have allowed love to spread to more people. With local people helping themselves and each other, the land will recover much more quickly and grow even stronger.

“Outside help is just a temporary stimulus,” Cheng declared. “The most important thing is to awaken the land’s ability to heal itself.”

#### Bodhi tree forest

The last free clinic was held in Maputo at the Tzu Chi Home, which occupies an area of over three hectares. More than 90 mango trees grew there; there were also heavily laden lemon trees on the lot.

The Tzu Chi doctors treated patients under the mango trees. Working outdoors, Cheng felt energetic and cheerful. The scene brought to his mind the story of a famous ancient Chinese doctor—Dong Feng (董奉, 220-280). Although Dong was known for his superb medical skills, he never charged his patients for his services. Instead, he asked those that he had cured of serious illnesses to plant five apricot trees near his house and those cured of minor ailments to plant a single such tree. A few years later, the trees had grown into a large, lush forest. The doctor built a



**Elina Esmael Matavele (left), a Tzu Chi volunteer in Mozambique, passed out because of high blood pressure when she was volunteering at the free clinic held at the Tzu Chi Home. After Dr. Cheng treated her with bloodletting, she returned to consciousness with her blood pressure back to normal.**

# Not Just Dispensing Medicine but Passing on Experience

By Hong Shu-zhen and Wu Xiu-ling

Translated by George Chen

*Despite the challenges of working in temporary, makeshift pharmacies, we managed to dispense 5,000 prescriptions in four days. We were also able to pass on our knowledge and experience to local medical students. Thinking about the needy I’ve served at every free clinic always reminds me to seize every opportunity I can to give to the underserved.—Pharmacist Wang Zhi-min, Tainan*



The moon was bright and clear at night in Mozambique. At dawn, the sunrise was breathtaking. During the day, the blue sky and white clouds reflected in a lotus pond were so picturesque they stopped people in their tracks.

In contrast, the huts people lived in were simple and crude. School classrooms were shabby and makeshift, cooking utensils were primitive, and even the footballs the children played with were nothing more than plastic bags tied together.

Despite the difficult living conditions, the children were endearingly innocent and the villagers optimistic and cheerful. When they saw the Tzu Chi volunteers who had come to their area to pro-

**Several medical school students from the Catholic University of Mozambique learned and helped out at the pharmacy at the free clinic held at the school. Wang Zhi-min (fifth from left) generously shared his medicine-dispensing experience and expertise with the students.**

ZHANG MEI-LING

vide free medical services, they surrounded the visitors with laughter and singing.

Pharmacist Wang Zhi-min (王智民), a Tzu Chi volunteer from Tainan, southern Taiwan, set out for Mozambique on May 12, 2019. He was a member of a reconnaissance team whose duty was to conduct on-site inspections and prepare for four





**Wang Zhi-min and Chen Hong-yan, two pharmacists, work in a makeshift pharmacy at a Tzu Chi free clinic conducted in Lamego village, Nhamatanda.**

CAI KAI-FAN

free clinic events that Tzu Chi was holding in Mozambique. He arrived in the country a few days earlier than most of the other medical volunteers, who wouldn't arrive until May 18, and so he got to see and experience some more of Mozambique than his teammates.

During those few days, Wang was able to witness and share the joy of a little girl who had just received new notebooks from Tzu Chi. He saw how a single pot of cornmeal was what an entire family had to share for their dinner. He watched while boys in Lamego village, Nhamatanda, played football—with a "football" made of layers of plastic bags tied together. From such direct interactions, Wang could empathize more with the villagers whose already difficult lives had been made harder by the onslaught of Cyclone Idai.

#### Pharmacy as classroom

The pharmacy was always very busy during the free clinics. At the clinic held at the Catholic University of Mozambique in Beira, six medical students who would graduate next year were sent by their professor to learn and help out. Wang explained to the students the prescriptions to be filled, imparting his knowledge to the future doctors. "Their professor hopes that they can learn what types of medicine doctors in Taiwan prescribe for their patients, and the role pharmacists in Taiwan play in the treatment process."

The medical students made good use of this opportunity to learn. They said that they had learned a lot from the experience and that the knowledge they had acquired would be put to good use in the future. One of the students, Raposo, observed: "Many people have been plagued by infectious diseases as a result of the flooding. The antibiotics given by the Tzu Chi medical team are the best and can treat many diseases." He thanked Tzu Chi volunteers for demonstrating their love to his country, and also for enabling him to gain more medical knowledge and clinical experience.

In preparation for the free clinics in Mozambique, pharmacists Wang and Chen Hong-yan (陳紅燕), as well as medical doctor Ye Tianhao (葉添浩), designed a standardized prescription form so that doctors could prescribe medications more conveniently, and pharmacists could dispense medicine more quickly. As a result, almost 5,000 prescriptions were dispensed during the four large-scale free clinics, despite the limited manpower and immense time pressure.

These large operations were completed in challengingly simple environments. At the clinic conducted at a school in Lamego, the pharmacy was housed in a classroom whose roof had been blown off by the cyclone. A canvas was stretched over the room to serve as a makeshift roof. At the clinic at the Tzu Chi Home in Maputo, the pharmacy was made up of a few long tables under mango trees. Though the facilities were makeshift, the pharmacists prepared each prescription just as carefully as if they were working in a state-of-the-art pharmacy to relieve patients of their suffering.

#### Education is most important

Wang's parents are also Tzu Chi volunteers. Engaged in wholesale traditional Chinese medicine, they educated their children through their own behavior. For example, they never charged the poor for their purchases. When Wang was in junior high, he started participating in Tzu Chi activities with his parents. He was influenced by what he saw and heard, and he came to appreciate his blessings more from witnessing others' suffering.

While studying at the Chia Nan College of Pharmacy (now the Chia Nan University of Pharmacy and Science), Wang met Cai Hui-hua (蔡慧樺), who later became his spouse. Together they started a pharmacy. With other business partners, they also set up a biotechnology company specializing in health food research and production. When Wang was the president of the Parents Association at Tainan Tzu Chi Elementary School, he often volunteered at Tzu Chi events. In 2015, he became a certified Tzu Chi volunteer. His wife followed in his footsteps and received her certification in 2017.

Wang has participated in six free clinic missions since he was certified more than three years ago—in Jordan, the Philippines, Cambodia, and Mozambique. The experience of serving the needy in medically underserved areas made him realize how blessed he is to live in Taiwan. He often shares his volunteer work experience with his children and encourages them to participate in public service activities.

Wang says that owning his own pharmacy and biotechnology company gives him more flexibility with his time and schedule. When he travels overseas to volunteer, he has managers to help him manage the company and his wife to run the pharmacy. Therefore, he can volunteer without worries. "My motivation to serve is pretty simple," he declared. "I don't want to miss out on any opportunity to form good affinities with others."

He discovered during his trip to Mozambique that the people there were philosophical and accepting in nature. Despite losing their homes and loved ones to Cyclone Idai, they remained optimistic and positive. When they saw Tzu Chi volunteers coming from other countries to provide medical services to them, they welcomed them with sheer enthusiasm.

Another scene left an indelible mark on Wang during his trip. He and other volunteers were in Maputo purchasing medicine. They were waiting at an intersection for the traffic light to change when they saw a little boy, carrying a brush and a

bottle of water, run to vehicles stopped at the traffic light, respectfully bow to the people in each car, and clean the windows. He would clean several cars during the short duration of the red light in the hope that some drivers would give him a tip.

Wang was saddened that a boy of such a young age had to do whatever he could to make money, and he pondered what his future would hold for him. He remembered Master Cheng Yen once said that the only way to help the poorest of the poor was through education—it was only through education that their lives could be turned around. The encounter with the young boy helped Wang gain a deeper appreciation of the Master's compassionate and noble commitment to helping the needy.

Wang's earlier free clinic trip to Jordan, on the other hand, stirred in him very different feelings. The Syrian refugees in Jordan had all been forced to leave their country. In addition to coping with the loss of their material possessions, they also lived in constant fear—even though they slept in tents at a refugee camp, they feared that a bomb might suddenly drop on them. Uprooted from their homes and country, they were like duckweed, having no root to anchor them.

"Just like now, whenever I talk about or think of what I saw and experienced in Jordan, I feel like crying," Wang said, choking with emotion. "I feel a sense of helplessness, a despondence at not being able to help." He added that the experience in Jordan had motivated him to do whatever he could to help whomever he could.

Despite the sadness he had felt in Jordan, there were some positive memories associated with the trip. An eight-year-old refugee girl named Lugain had been very short for her age due to a severe deficiency of growth hormone. She was referred to Tzu Chi Jordan for help. After learning about this, Wang found a supplier of hormone injections that would sell the medicine for a lower price. He purchased a year and a half's worth of the medication and had it delivered to Jordan. After three months, Lugain grew from 104 centimeters to 114 centimeters, and she continues to make progress with the treatment.

Wang met Lugain during his trip to Jordan, in July 2018. He was deeply moved by her sweet smile and her mother's gratitude. The joy of being able to help them warms his heart to this day.

That he can volunteer in free clinics in underserved areas as a pharmacist means a lot to him, and he has high expectations of himself. "The underprivileged people I've met serve as reminders that I have to seize every opportunity to give, that I must work hard and contribute what I can." ❀



*Ten years ago, in August 2009, people in Taiwan were feeling anxious about a water shortage, so when Typhoon Morakot was predicted to sweep onto the island, everyone began to hope that the storm would bring timely rain and help alleviate the drought. Little did they know that the typhoon would become the deadliest storm to hit Taiwan in recorded history.*

*Morakot left 681 people dead and 18 people missing. It destroyed homes and caused significant losses of property. Ten years have passed since this shattering calamity. Despite feeling deep sorrow, victims have bravely carried on and tried to create new lives for themselves.*



## THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF TYPHOON MORAKOT

BY TZU CHI MONTHLY EDITORIAL STAFF  
TRANSLATED BY WU HSIAO-TING  
PHOTOS BY HSIAO YIU-HWA



## Ferrying Love

Linbian Township, Pingtung County, southern Taiwan, was one of the areas hit hard by Typhoon Morakot. With the help of military vehicles, Tzu Chi volunteers deliver hot meals and emergency supplies to victims stranded by flooding in their homes (right). Carrying supplies on his head, a local resident wades through waist-deep water to return home (below).







## Emotional and Material Care

Tzu Chi volunteers visited affected households in the aftermath of the typhoon to offer care and support and learn what they could do to help. Tzu Chi also provided free medical services in disaster areas, such as in Wandan, Pingtung (left). A volunteer wipes away the tears of a victim in Wandan who still feels shaken by the storm (top right). Volunteers trudge with great effort through thick mud as they assess damage in Danei, Tainan (bottom right).





## Rebirth

On November 15, 2009, construction for the Shanlin Great Love Village kicked off. Tzu Chi built this community especially for people who had lost their homes to Typhoon Morakot. Built in two phases, the completed village would become home to over a thousand families. Survivors themselves were invited to participate in the construction on a work relief program, and the project had already made good progress by January 2010 (below). People pose in front of a newly completed church in the village on the day the first worship was held there, February 20, 2010 (right).







## Doing Our Best to Carry On

By Fu Yu-nu

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

*The longan tree under which the villagers took shelter after the disaster still stands tall, but Xiaolin Village is long gone, buried more than ten meters underground. Ye Xiu-xia no longer cries over that tragedy that happened ten years ago, but she still deeply misses her lost family members. Nevertheless, she tells herself: "We've received help from people around the world. We can never pay them back. The best way for us to thank them is to press on and keep living bravely."*

A decade had passed, but the riverbed at the foot of Mount Xiandu was still blanketed with the rocks and debris that had rolled off the mountain ten years ago, when Typhoon Morakot hit. Grass here and there had grown taller than a man, adding to the desolate feel of the area. The mountainside ahead looked stripped and bare—the way it had looked after the landslide. Xiaolin Village, a tribal community that used to be here, was long gone. It existed only in people's memory now.

Ye Xiu-xia (葉秀霞) and Fu Yu-nu (傅玉女) stood shoulder by shoulder on an embankment, looking out together at Mount Xiandu, both contemplating the disaster that had changed everything here. Ye used to be a resident of Xiaolin Village, and Fu is a Tzu Chi volunteer.

On July 18, 2008, torrential rains caused by Typhoon Kalmaegi triggered landslides in some areas in southern Taiwan. All roads leading to Xiaolin Village, in Jiaxian, Kaohsiung, were cut off. Some Tzu Chi volunteers carried supplies and

traveled on foot over No. 9 Bridge to reach the village. By the time they arrived, Ye and the other villagers had already gone a few days without running water, electricity, and food. Everyone was excited and touched when they saw a group of strangers clad in blue shirts and white trousers arriving at the village, bringing drinking water and daily necessities.

Ye volunteered to be a guide for the volunteers. "I'll take you to the villagers who have been more badly affected by the typhoon. I hope Tzu Chi can help us clean up our community and allow our lives to return to normal as soon as possible." Fu Yu-nu was among the volunteers who had visited Xiaolin Village. She was very impressed with the warm-hearted and spirited Ye. A strong solidarity had always existed among the residents, and with the help of Tzu Chi, the village got back on its feet very quickly.

Little did anyone expect that a year later Xiaolin Village would be all but wiped out by another storm.

**Former residents of Xiaolin Village participate in an annual nocturnal sacrifice of the Taivoan people. Through this event, they gather together and find in each other the courage to press on in life's journey.**

LU XIU-FANG

On August 8, 2009, Typhoon Morakot brought heavy rains to Taiwan. By three a.m. on August 9, floodwaters had reached the Tai Zi Temple in Xiaolin Village, even though the temple was located on higher ground. At 6:10 that same morning, a massive landslide occurred on the 1,600-meter-tall (5,250-foot-tall) Mount Xiandu, located behind Xiaolin Village. The landslide hit the village with astonishing speed, swallowing up a good part of the community and killing more than 400 people. Only about 50 villagers managed to escape.

The villagers who had escaped the landslide were soon faced with another great danger. A large landslide-dammed lake that had formed after the disaster collapsed. Ye, with her children in tow, ran desperately with other villagers for their lives. They had several close calls, as huge rocks rolled and landed behind them. With a great deal of effort, they finally reached a hilltop. All of them, more than 40 in total, had been drenched to the bone. Almost no one was wearing shoes. They huddled together, cold and hungry, under a large longan tree next to a shed. Children began suffering from dehydration and hypothermia, their lips turning purple. The only thing the adults could do was hold them close to keep them warm.

For the next two days, the villagers saw helicopters circling in the sky. They built fires to attract attention to their plight and were finally rescued. The rescuers let women, children, and the elderly and infirm get on the helicopters first. It wasn't until five in the evening of August 10 that everyone was out safely. They were placed in a temporary shelter at the Shun Xian Temple in Neimen, Kaohsiung.

Worried about the villagers, volunteer Fu visited the temple to check on them. She happened to pass by someone that looked very familiar on the second floor. Retracing her steps, she called out, "Aren't you Ye Xiu-xia from Xiaolin Village?" Meeting after such a major calamity, the two hugged and broke into tears.

A survivors' list had been posted on a bulletin board at the temple. Ye, her husband, and children had safely escaped. Sadly, her grandmother, parents-in-law, and brother-in-law's three-member family had not been so lucky. They had all perished. Fu took a set of Buddhist prayers beads off

her wrist and gave it to Ye, hoping to give her courage.

Fu had obtained that bracelet of prayer beads when she had received her volunteer certification from Master Cheng Yen, who had personally put it on her wrist. The bracelet meant a lot to Fu and parting with it was hard, but she resolutely passed it on to Ye. Holding the beads in her palm, Ye felt the warmth from Fu, and her eyes misted up with tears.

### Regaining normalcy

Organizations including the Tzu Chi Foundation built permanent housing communities for people who had lost their homes to Typhoon Morakot. Ye and her husband chose to move into one that was closer to the old Xiaolin Village.

The landslide had buried a shrine in Xiaolin Village where religious events of the Taivoan, an indigenous people in Taiwan, were held. (Most Xiaolin residents were Taivoan). Two months after the disaster, surviving villagers built a temporary shrine and held their annual nocturnal sacrifice there. Many people who were from the village but now lived elsewhere also attended the ceremony.

Over the years since then, this traditional annual ceremony has been held just as usual. In 2018, the ceremony was held on October 23 at a shrine located at the Pingpu (lowland aborigines) Culture Park in Jiaxian, Kaohsiung. The park is in a new community for former residents of Xiaolin Village, the community in which Ye now lives.

There were ritual activities during the day and night during the ceremony. At night, tribal elders, wearing wreaths on their heads, led villagers in singing ancient tunes. Hand in hand they danced into the shrine and offered sacrificial goods to their guardian deities. Their singing and chanting were peaceful and serene. Despite the profound sadness they had experienced, the annual event allowed villagers of Xiaolin to gather together and find in each other the courage to press on in life's journey.

However, the "annihilation" of the Xiaolin Village was such a painful memory that some people hadn't yet emerged from the traumatic experience. Wang Hui-huang (王輝煌), 67, was out of town working when the typhoon hit and therefore escaped being killed in the landslide. His wife wasn't so lucky—she was one of those killed in the event. Her death hit him hard. A few years ago, Wang's daughter moved back with him to keep him company, and he began growing cacti. Cultivating the plants became the focus of





**Ye Xiu-xia and her family have relocated to this new community in Jiaxian, Kaohsiung. The community was built by the Red Cross.**

ZHANG QING-WEN

his life, but it wasn't enough to fill the emptiness in his heart. Missing his wife, he often cried. Ye Xiu-xia saw him on the morning of the annual nocturnal sacrifice, when he was leading a group of young people in fixing the straw roof of the shrine. But he disappeared back into his world after that, not wanting to face the crowd.

Looking at Wang's desolate figure as he walked away, Ye knew very well that on the surface everyone's life seemed to have gotten back on track, but the sense of loss in their hearts was still there. It would be very hard to truly heal those scars.

### Keep going

When she feels depressed and down, Ye especially looks forward to the visits of Fu Yu-nu. Fu regularly visits to chat and have lunch with her. Ye has felt more vulnerable since the disaster, and is especially afraid whenever a typhoon is coming. Knowing how she feels, Fu makes a point of phoning her at such times.

Ye and her husband made a living after the disaster by growing bananas on a rented plot of land of 1.4 acres, and by serving as tour guides for people visiting the local area. Unfortunately, another typhoon in 2016 razed their orchard and destroyed every single one of their banana trees.

To put food on the table, Ye tried to expand their sources of income. Inspired by the bamboo cups used during the annual nocturnal sacrifices, she created a product and marketed it. Every year during July and August she goes up to the mountains to pick wild bamboo shoots. She dries them and preserves them for sale. She and her fellow villagers who had run together for their lives



**Ye (middle) wields a flag in an annual sacrificial ceremony.**

ZHANG QING-WEN

years ago get together before Chinese New Year and make sticky rice cake, a food typically eaten during Chinese New Year, then post it for sale on the Internet. Similarly, they make and sell moon cakes using locally grown passion fruit before the arrival of the Mid-Autumn Festival.

Ye has since converted her banana orchard into a guava farm—guavas can be harvested several times a year. However, since farming is a livelihood heavily dependent on the weather, the couple's income still isn't very reliable. Instead of hiring hands to help, she and her husband try to do almost everything themselves.

One day near noon, Ye was bagging guavas growing on the trees on her farm to protect them from insects or other damage when she heard a loud rumble from afar. She raised her head to see a large mass of earth and rock falling down Mount Xiandu and stirring up thick clouds of dust. Though the major landslide happened over a decade ago, masses of earth and rock are still on the move.

The longan tree under which Ye and her fellow villagers had taken shelter after the disaster still stands tall. The canvas cloth they had used to protect themselves from the elements still lies, covered by earth, under the tree. But the Tai Zi Temple halfway up the mountain is gone, and Xiaolin Village is buried more than ten meters (33 feet) underground. Ye no longer sheds tears over that tragedy ten years ago, but she still deeply misses her lost family members. Nevertheless, she tells herself, "Those of us who have survived must do our best to carry on. We've received help from people around the world. We can never pay them back. The best way for us to thank them is to press on and keep living bravely." ❀

# Get It Done vs. Get It Done Well

By Cheah Lee Hwa, director of the Office of Humanities, Tzu Chi University of Science and Technology  
Abridged and translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

**W**hen I tell my students to put in more effort on their homework, they often cannot understand why I'm so demanding. "Isn't it good enough that we get it done?" they ask.

Sometimes it's not just students that display this attitude, but people who have entered the workforce as well. When assigned a task by their superiors, some feel that as long as they can finish it before the deadline, it's "mission accomplished" and all is well.

To help my students understand that simply getting something done isn't the same thing as getting it done well, I gave them examples of the attitude with which Tzu Chi volunteers carry out humanitarian work.

In September and October 1998, Hurricanes Georges and Mitch pounded Central America, killing and injuring tens of thousands of people and leaving over a million people homeless. In addition to giving different kinds of aid, Tzu Chi also started a clothing drive for survivors in Honduras, the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Haiti. The drive collected enough garments to fill 60 freight containers.

However, among the donated clothes, some were dirty, had holes in them, or were missing buttons. Volunteers washed those that were dirty and mended those that were torn, and if a row of buttons was missing one, they replaced the entire row.

Sewing in a single button different from the original ones would suffice, but that is simply "getting a job done." On the other hand, replacing the entire row of buttons is a supreme example of "getting a job done well."

Master Cheng Yen always reminds Tzu Chi volunteers to treat disaster victims with respect to

help them feel the love and warmth of the world. Such warm feelings will in turn bring courage and strength to the survivors and sustain them on the road to recovery. The volunteers who sorted the donated clothes were acting in accordance with the Master's teachings. They replaced entire rows of buttons because they didn't want the survivors to feel that they were getting clothes others had thrown out or didn't want. They didn't want to make the disaster victims feel that they should be happy with whatever they could get. This extra layer of consideration goes a long way toward comforting victims who are going through a rough patch.

Another example occurred when Tzu Chi was aiding the Philippines in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan, which hit that nation in November 2013. To help the city of Tacloban recover from the disaster, Tzu Chi initiated a work relief program through which the foundation paid survivors to clean up their own flooded neighborhoods. Master Cheng Yen proposed giving those who participated in the program twice the minimum daily wage in Tacloban because she felt that work relief was different from regular labor compensation—it contained an element of love and best wishes for the victims. She hoped that by meeting the victims' urgent needs, Tzu Chi could instill strength in them and help them get back on their feet. In the end, the program did infuse energy into the city, which was almost knocked out of commission by the storm, and helped the city return to normalcy.

I asked my students to think about these examples and ponder the difference between simply "getting it done" and "doing it well." If they hold higher expectations for themselves instead of doing things without real effort, every-one benefits. ❀



# A New Multipurpose Building for A Senior Citizens' Home

## A Tzu Chi Project

*The Taitung Ren'ai Senior Citizens' Home in Taitung, southeastern Taiwan, is a facility for low-income or disabled elderly people referred by the Taitung County government. The institution is known for the quality care it provides for its residents. It could have provided a more comfortable living environment, but was constrained by a limited space. This also made it difficult to take in more eligible needy people. In response, Tzu Chi funded and constructed a multi-purpose building for the institution to improve the living conditions there and allow residents to have better rehabilitation facilities.*

By Lin Su-yue  
Translated by George Chen  
Photos by Hsiao Yiu-hwa



An inauguration ceremony was held on June 30, 2019 for a new building Tzu Chi built for the Taitung Ren'ai Senior Citizens' Home. All the invited guests were happy to see that the residents were now able to enjoy a more comfortable and spacious living area.

CHEN XIN-AN



Taiwan has officially become an aged society. The population of Taitung, on Taiwan's southeastern seaboard, is aging at an especially alarming rate. According to statistics released in December 2018, there were more than 35,000 elderly people (aged 65 or above) in the county, accounting for 16 percent of the entire population. Taitung's aging index has exceeded 100, meaning that there are more people there over the age of 65 than under the age of 14.

The aging demographics informs the need of society to focus more on long-term geriatric care. Physical and mental functions deteriorate as people age, making them more accident prone. As the number of elderly in the population has increased, it's natural that the need for retirement homes and assisted living facilities has risen sharply.

Mrs. Chen, 80, suffers from limited mobility as a result of a car accident. Because her husband is also quite elderly and their children live apart from them, there is no one to provide her with full-time care at home. With no other option, Chen moved into the Taitung Ren'ai Senior Citizens' Home in Taitung. She's been living there for ten years. She is well cared for, and looks neat and tidy and in good shape. Her husband visits her daily and personally feeds her three meals a day.

Mr. Chen is a dedicated husband. His love is apparent in the way he treats his wife. He often touches her face with his hand and looks at her lovingly, saying, "My dear, thank you for accompanying me through thick and thin on life's journey. I'm so sorry that you don't have a healthy body to enjoy your old age, and I, unable to care for you, had to send you here." Helplessness and guilt are written on his face.

Mr. Chen lamented that he used to believe that children are insurance for old age, that it is their responsibility to care for you, shelter you, and support you financially in your frailty. However, he realizes that as society and family values evolve, and as young people are also burdened by their own livelihood challenges, it is time to let go of that mentality. "Fortunately, there are charity organizations like this home that are willing to take in and provide elderly people like us with 24-hour care," he said, "Charities like this help ensure that we're well cared for in old age and can live with peace of mind and dignity."

#### Sixty years' care for the elderly

Located in a relatively remote region in Taiwan, Taitung overlooks the Pacific Ocean to

the east and is nestled against the Central Mountain Range to the west. The county is populated by diverse ethnic groups and maintains agriculture as the mainstay of its economy. For a long time, Taitung has been ranked as having one of the lowest average disposable incomes and life expectancies in Taiwan.

The Taitung Ren'ai Senior Citizens' Home, located in Taitung City, the county seat of Taitung County, was established in 1960. It was originally named "Private Taitung Nursing Home," but was renamed "Ren'ai [Benevolence and Love] Senior Citizens' Home" in 1989. According to director Lin Hong-qi (林鴻祺), more than a thousand people have lived in the facility over the years. Several residents have been there for more than 20 years, and quite a few over ten years.

Since its inception almost 60 years ago, the home has always adhered to its "charity" principle—that is, it focuses its care on senior citizens who have no one around to care for them, or people who are physically or mentally disabled. Low-income residents account for 70 percent of the population, and indigenous people nearly 40 percent. Of the 119 beds approved by the local government, an average of 115 beds have been occupied in recent years. The institution has been running at almost full capacity for years.

Tzu Chi volunteers began visiting the residents of the home regularly 13 years ago, and they also occasionally refer older people who live alone and who are under Tzu Chi's long-term care to the facility to live. Volunteer Wang Wu-hong (王武弘) said that the home provides the best care to its residents. Some residents have had a glorious past, but were sadly struck by misfortune and thus ended up being very unhappy. Tzu Chi volunteers try to bring them comfort and laughter by being part of their lives.

In 2015, the Tzu Chi Foundation learned that the home could provide a more comfortable living environment to its residents but was confined by a lack of space. To allow the elderly and disabled to live more comfortably, the foundation decided to construct a multi-purpose building for the institution. This initiative—building for a private charity organization—was the first of its kind in Tzu Chi's 53-year history.

Construction started on January 8, 2018. During the groundbreaking ceremony, Justin Huang (黃健庭), the Taitung County magistrate at the time, stated that there were 13 senior citizen institutions in the county with a total of 730 beds. The usage rate exceeded 85 percent and was pro-

A Tzu Chi volunteer serves food to a resident at the Ren'ai Senior Citizens' Home. The home began serving only vegetarian meals to its residents in January 2018. LIU WEN-RUI

With a history of nearly 60 years, the home was old and showing wear and tear, and it was constrained by its limited space from providing a better living environment for its residents. LIU WEN-RUI







**The new multi-purpose building has an activity center which will make it easier for the home's residents to socialize with people from the local community through various events.**

jected to attain full capacity within two or three years. It was therefore imperative to add more beds. The new building for the home was projected to add an additional 80 beds, greatly helping the home and Taitung County to better care for the region's elderly residents.

#### Humanized facilities

Named "Mutual Love Building," the new facility is a three-story structure with 81 beds. With the new addition, the home can now accommodate 200 residents. The building also has a day-care center, a 30-bed staff living quarters, and a communal dining hall where people from the local community can dine with the home's residents. The exterior of the building is pebble-dashed, and the color design and construction style integrate harmoniously with the rest of the home.

The facility was completed in January 2019, after a year and a half of construction, and an

opening ceremony was held on June 30. Taitung County Magistrate Rao Ching-ling (饒慶鈴) and Taitung City Mayor Chang Kuo-chou (張國洲) were among the distinguished guests who cut the ribbon.

Lin Kun-ceng (林坤層), a Taitung-based architect responsible for the building design, pointed out that since the home is a nursing center for senior citizens and people with limited mobility, providing for their special needs was especially important when it came to designing the building.

He emphasized that the idea for his design came from his observation of a nursing institution his mother had moved into a few years earlier. That institution was designed with well-allocated space and an informed attention to safety issues. When he started designing the new building for the home, he kept his observations in mind, hoping to make up for the insufficiencies of the old facilities and provide residents with better private and public space.

The activity room, bathrooms, wet and dry kitchen, dining area, nursing station, and rehabilitation room in the new building are all "obstacle-



free," meaning that all facilities are handicapped accessible. Each floor is designed with concentrated open spaces to enhance a sense of spaciousness and avoid feelings of constraint. All this was geared towards making the residents more comfortable and to make them feel physically and emotionally safe.

Li Ren-kui (李壬癸) is the home's third chairman. He said that he was over 80 years old and that it was a real comfort to be able to witness in his lifetime the completion of the new building—in a way it signified his life's work coming to a happy conclusion. He felt as if his long years of hard work for the home had finally bloomed like a beautiful flower.

Li was a successful businessman who started giving back to society many decades ago out of a sense of gratitude. He has devoted himself to philanthropy for many years, sparing no efforts in helping the needy in Taitung. In 1986, he became a board member at the home. He said that most of the institution's residents are low-income and underprivileged. Financial help from the government is limited, and the long-term administration cost is substantial. The

**A resident at the home offers to share some fruit with a Tzu Chi volunteer. Volunteers from the foundation have provided onsite care to residents at the home for many years.**

home mostly relies on private funding, including donations from the board members, to resolve operational challenges.

Three years ago, Li took over as board chairman. He has since been actively involved in the running of the home, including arranging for Tzu Chi volunteers to provide onsite care for the residents and hold events such as prayer services. The year before last, he even convinced the home's board members to support an across-the-board vegetarian meal plan for the residents. Since January 31, 2018, only vegetarian meals have been served at the home, making it the first nursing institution in Taiwan to go completely vegetarian.

In the future, the home aims to provide more comprehensive services to its residents. Tzu Chi volunteers will also continue to visit regularly and accompany the residents with love and care through their twilight years.



## How the Project Came About



On September 9, 1960, philanthropist Hong Gua (洪掛), together with 15 local gentry members, founded the Private Taitung Nursing Home in Taitung, which was then a hard-to-access economic backwater where people led hard lives. The nursing home was the first privately sponsored social welfare institute in the county, home to over 30 residents at the time, including young orphans, elderly people with no one to depend on, and people with disabilities. Residents not only lived there for free, but were given allowances as well.

The home was renamed “Private Taitung Ren’ai Senior Citizens’ Home” 30 years ago, in 1989. Later, in response to the growing need of care for older people, the local government subsidized the construction of a building for the institution. The new building was completed in March 2007.

Many decades ago, when Dharma Master Cheng Yen first left home to pursue a religious life, she visited Taitung in search of an ideal place to carry out her spiritual cultivation. It was during that time that she first heard of Hong’s philanthropic deeds. Later, when Tzu Chi was established, Hong generously supported the organiza-

**A front view of the new building. The design of this three-story facility took into consideration the needs of elderly and disabled residents.**

tion’s missions. In 2015, when the Master visited Taitung on one of her regular trips around Taiwan, she decided to make an unscheduled visit to the home. She saw during her visit that though the facility was not big, it provided shelter to many needy senior citizens and people with disabilities. She also saw that despite showing wear and tear, the home was very clean and well managed by the staff. Nevertheless, the place was really too small for the current number of residents, and the limited space also prevented it from admitting more underserved people.

The Master was touched by the care the home gave its residents. She felt that Tzu Chi should support such a good organization. A project was thus launched to build a new building for the institution. The Master hoped that with the additional space, the residents could eat together in the dining area and avoid any anxiety springing out of living in the overly confined space. ❀

# Shrink Your Ego and Win Love

By Wang Gui-nan

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Photos by Wang Gui-nan

*She looked forward to happily-ever-after when she got married, but she was bitterly disappointed. After going through one rough patch after another, she realized that being tough and unyielding only led her to hurt others, but that shrinking her ego helped her win love.*

In 2001, the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States shocked the whole world. That year, Li Ying-xiu (李英秀) also experienced an earth-shattering event in her marriage. Twenty years into her marriage, she learned from her own children that her husband was having an affair.

### Driving her kids away

Li, 57, was born in Tainan, southern Taiwan. The oldest child in her family, she was a stern sister to her siblings, who easily got a scolding from her. After she graduated from junior high, she decided to move out and start working. This was primarily to escape from her unhappy family—her parents were constantly fighting. After working at a textile company for a few years, she started to dream of meeting her Mr. Right: “After I marry, I won’t have to work, and I’ll be able to live happily ever after.” She met her future husband through her uncle and tied the knot with him when she was 19.

Li did her best to be a good homemaker and gave her children—two sons and a daughter—the best care she could. Her husband was a construction contractor and often had to work out of town. Sometimes he returned home just once a month. But instead of cherishing their time together when he was home, Li often used the opportunities to complain. She said it was tough running a household with three kids and that she needed more TLC from him. Though she may have been right, the way she put it and her tone and attitude were far from winning. As a result, they always ended up arguing.

With her husband away a lot, her life revolved around her children. She was always hovering

around them. However, her helicopter parenting style drove them away instead of bringing them closer to her.

“I was very much influenced by my parents when it came to parenting and disciplining my children,” Li recalled. “My parents never explained to us what we had done wrong; they just resorted to scolding and beating.”

She was concerned that her children would end up in bad company, so she imposed strict curfews on them and demanded that they come home immediately after school. She refused to talk to them and learn what they felt about this.

Her daughter, Zhang Ya-rou (張雅柔), began avoiding her mother when she was in junior high. If she came home from school and found her mom home, she would hightail it to her room without first greeting her mom or saying anything to her. She said she was just trying to avoid “disaster” because as soon as she and her mom began talking, an argument would erupt.

Using her authority as a mother to keep her children on track was all Li knew. It wasn’t that she didn’t want to improve her relationships with her children—she just didn’t know how.

Her relationships with her kids showed no sign of improving, but her marriage was on the rocks too. When she was 39, she found out that her husband was having an affair. She was devastated. Her bitterness and unhappiness further strained her ties with her kids. “Mom took her resentment for dad out on us,” recalled her younger son, Zhang Ke-qiang (張克強). “We knew she was in pain, but we were miserable too.”

Yet more blows were in store for her. Li’s husband cosigned a loan for a friend, using their





**Li learned to use a computer so that she can set things up at the Siqiao Recycling Station. Her work allows volunteers to gather together and listen to Master Cheng Yen's Dharma talks via videoconferencing.**

house as collateral. Unfortunately, the friend defaulted on the loan. In order to save their home, Li's three children began working by day and going to school by night to make money. Later, her husband borrowed money from a loan shark to help with the cash flow in his business, but he ran off in the end, leaving his wife and children to repay the debt.

Li decided to learn a skill and work to help with her family's finances. She took up hairdress-

ing. "All I felt toward my husband was resentment," she said. "He stopped coming home entirely. It wasn't until we settled all his debts that he began visiting us every once in a while."

#### **Forgiving others is being kind to yourself**

Li remembered what a celebrity had once said: "If you want to change your fate, you first have to do good deeds." Therefore, when she met Tzu Chi volunteer Zheng Han-yi (鄭涵憶) in the hair salon where she worked, she quickly became a Tzu Chi donating member and began making monthly donations to the charity foundation.

Li recalled that Zheng often showed care and concern for her and asked how she and her family were doing. She also suggested that she watch

Tzu Chi's Da Ai TV. After some time, Li decided to give it a try, so she tuned into the station. "I thought that since I always just sat and stared into the air when I returned home after work," she said, "I might just as well check out this Da Ai channel."

"It's not enough to have love in your heart—you must also express it through actions." It gave her pause when she saw this aphorism by Master Cheng Yen appear on the screen.

"I used to have such a strong personality that I rarely listened to others," she said, "Everything rubbed me the wrong way. I had love in my heart, but I rarely translated it into action."

Resonating with Master Cheng Yen's teachings, she began volunteering for Tzu Chi by serving at the Siqiao Recycling Station in Tainan. She also started to learn to show her love for her family and people around her.

She even decided to extend her love to her husband. But she soon found that it's easy to love those that you like, but a real pain to love those that you don't. After a long struggle, however, she managed to change her attitude towards her husband. She worked on forgiving him, and she even asked her kids to do the same and show respect for their father.

Her children were outraged at first: How could their mother show leniency towards their father after what he had done to them? They even said that something had to be "wrong with her upstairs" for her to suggest that they forgive and respect him.

Li shared with her children the Tzu Chi Four-Magic Soup: contentment, gratitude, understanding, and accommodation. She also extolled her husband's virtues and explained his situation to them to bring them around. By and by, her younger son, Ke-qiang, began to change his attitude, and he was no longer so averse to his irresponsible father. "Mom told us that when she went to visit the needy, she saw people who had had it worse than us," Ke-qiang observed. "She said that at least our father provided for us when we were growing up."

Li's daughter, Ya-rou, eventually came around too. She was once so angry with her dad that she urged her mother to get a divorce, but she became more mature and thoughtful after she undertook voluntary military service. The change she witnessed in her mom helped dissolve her ill feelings towards her dad too. "After Mom joined Tzu Chi, she became more patient and better at listening to us," Ya-rou noted. "She's no longer such a



**Li (right) attends Master Cheng Yen's early morning Dharma talk at the Siqiao Recycling Station in Tainan.**  
YU BO-QING

critical and unreasonable person. She even told us that life is impermanent and that we should learn to be more broad-hearted so that we could be more at peace."

"Forgiving others is being kind to yourself." Li often pondered the wisdom of Master Cheng Yen's words and tried to internalize them to smooth her rough edges. When her husband occasionally returned home, she and her three children no longer looked at him with leery eyes. Instead, they treated him with respect. When Ke-qiang was getting married, he even phoned his father and invited him to his wedding.

#### **Challenges as a volunteer**

At the encouragement of Tzu Chi volunteer Xie Ying-mei (謝英美), Li started training to become a certified Tzu Chi volunteer. She received her certification in 2010. Her world was no longer confined to her family. However, with her volunteer work came more challenges for her to handle.

Not long after she was certified, she took on the role of a team leader. Besides running her own beauty salon, she often had to arrange for volunteers to undertake a variety of duties, such as attending funerals or chanting sutras for the



deceased. When she received instructions to find people to help out, she couldn't feel at ease until she had taken care of the matter. That sometimes meant she had to leave the customer she was serving to make some phone calls. "My customers were always telling me to attend to them first, before I made the phone calls," she recalled. "But I just couldn't feel at ease until I had found people who could volunteer."

When she was still new to her role as a team leader, she naively thought that people would be quick to accept whatever task she asked them to take on, but she soon found to her dismay that that wasn't the case. When she couldn't find enough people to undertake a task, she panicked. Only later did she realize that, before inviting other volunteers to serve, she should first learn who was more likely to be available during the week and who was freer on the weekend. Trying to accommodate their schedules was one way she would be less likely to receive no for an answer.

"Making phone calls to ask people to volunteer can test your patience," Li pointed out, "especially as some people are rather blunt." She said it was especially hard in the beginning, when she was newly certified and hadn't had the time to get to know many of her team members yet. As a result, she had a hard time getting them to do things. Fortunately, volunteer Xie Ying-mei, who had encouraged her to train to become a certified volunteer, stepped in. She helped Li enlist help, and she drove volunteers around to make it easier for them to go places. She urged Li not to feel frustrated, and to overcome difficulties instead of being overcome by them. She also coached her on how to handle these things on her own. She said to Li, "If you show enough goodwill, people will usually respond the same way. People may say no to you, but it doesn't mean that they will always say no to you."

Xie's support made her feel secure and gave her courage to keep going. Li did her best to learn the ropes, to master her role, so that she could be an asset instead of a burden to others. She told herself that not everyone had cultivated themselves well enough before they joined Tzu Chi—she should make allowances and keep an open mind. She learned as she went, fine-tuning her thinking and attitude and improving herself as a person.

**A retired hairdresser, Li cuts people's hair when she visits needy people and finds that they need a haircut.**

YU BO-QING

"If not for the training in Tzu Chi, I wouldn't have been able to let go of my ego and learn with humility," Li said. "I had a very strong personality. If I had refused to change, others would have found it really hard to work with me."

Her life hadn't been a smooth ride—her husband's affair, her problems with her children, the pressure to repay her husband's debts, and the challenges she encountered as a volunteer—but Li eventually emerged from it all a more mellow person.

Yet, like the old Chinese saying goes, "The road to happiness is strewn with setbacks," Li found a bigger challenge waiting around the corner for her.

### Keeping at it despite the pain

In 2012, a health checkup revealed that Li had a tumor in her thyroid and that she also suffered from rheumatoid arthritis. "The doctor found out that the tumor was malignant," Li said. "I didn't realize how bad the situation was, so I calmly underwent treatment."

Though she didn't worry much, the pain she experienced after surgery gave her a really hard



**Li sorts recycling with her toddler granddaughter at her side.**

Listening to her Dharma talks has greatly helped her grow spiritually. She uses her teachings to cleanse away her inner impurities and to return to her pure innate nature.

In 2014, volunteers in Li's area began gathering at the Siqiao Recycling Station early every morning to listen to Master Cheng Yen's Dharma talk via videoconferencing. Li is among those who attend the talks.

The talk starts every morning at 5:20. It takes discipline to rise so early to attend the talks, but Li has persisted. She found that absorbing the Master's teachings day in and

time. It took all she had to get down on her knees and to get back up. Her shoulders were stiff, and her joints ached.

"Sometimes just a light touch to my skin or the brush of a breeze triggered pain," Li recalled. "I had to take medicine every day. I developed a moon face due to the medicine I took, but I was still in pain." Only then did she realize how important her health was.

She had always been nimble, but even putting her feet on the floor after the surgery brought her sharp pain. Even so, she gritted her teeth and tried to move around as much as she could. That must have loosened her hamstrings or something because it then became easier for her to move around.

Li closed her shop permanently in 2014 and began focusing all her energies on volunteering. The Siqiao Recycling Station became her second home. Besides arranging for team members to serve at various events, she volunteered whenever she was needed. After a while, she found her health getting better and better.

Li believed that many illnesses are psychological in nature. Her doctor also told her that stress leads to endocrine disorders. In response, she tried to adjust her attitude towards all kinds of pressure in life and used volunteering to take her mind off her bodily discomforts. It worked well for her.

### A freer mind

Li feels that an important key in her transformation was Master Cheng Yen's teachings.

day out makes a real difference in her. Her endurance and perseverance have increased. She has become better at seeing things in perspective. Problems that used to bother her have stopped being problems, and things that used to feel difficult no longer feel so.

"We all tend to underestimate ourselves, convinced that it is beyond our abilities to undertake certain responsibilities," Li noted. "I'm grateful to the Master and Tzu Chi for helping me become stronger, more understanding, and more tolerant. I've found that if we can look at all things and people with compassion, everything will become so different."

She admitted that she had started attending the Master's early morning talks because she felt she was obligated to do so as a team leader, but in the end she was really glad she had done so. Listening to the Master's Dharma talks every day reminds her to constantly reflect on herself and remain humble. The Master has also taught her to distinguish between what she wants and what she needs. She has learned to let go of her attachments to many things. She now has fewer worries and a more peaceful mind.

She compared joining Tzu Chi to peeling an onion. Layer after layer, she peeled off her ignorance, pride, and other shortcomings. Though peeling an onion can sting your eyes and make your nose run, in the end you feel refreshed and invigorated. "That I have been able to see my faults and inadequacies, improve on them, and practice humility—these are my greatest rewards."



# The Illustrated JING SI APHORISMS

## The Buddha says:

We eat for our health  
so that we can learn or teach the Dharma.  
We do not eat just to enjoy good food.



DESIRE IN A HUMAN HEART  
IS LIKE THE BLAZING SUN IN  
THE DESERT, MAKING IT  
TOTALLY DRY AND THIRSTY.

THE DHARMA IS LIKE SWEET  
DEW OR RAIN, CONSTANTLY  
WATERING THE BARREN FIELDS  
OF HUMAN HEARTS.

IF WE CAN  
REDUCE OUR DESIRES,  
THEN THERE WILL BE  
NOTHING WORTH  
ARGUING OR FIGHTING  
OVER.



## How can religions join together, instead of dividing into little sects?

Master Cheng Yen replied: Any religion should keep true to its basic spirit. If believers divide into "us" and "them" and begin to argue and fight with each other, then they defile and harm the whole meaning of religion.

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



### Cambodia

Many destitute people in Cambodia cannot afford to install lighting or pay the electric bills. They rely on natural light during the day, and candlelight at night. To make life easier for some of these underprivileged people, Tzu Chi volunteers held two distributions of solar panel lighting sets in July. Rice was given out as well at those events. One distribution was held on July 7 for residents of Posenchey and Kombol, both in Phnom Penh, the national capital. Three hundred twenty-five families received lighting kits and 411 families received rice.

When volunteers visited the households on the recipient roster before the distribution to confirm those on the list, the residents repeatedly thanked them for reducing their burden and providing the light sets—the equipment would make it easier for their children to study at night. Recipients and volunteers alike were happy that the solar panel sets would help create a better studying environment for the children.

**On July 7, Tzu Chi volunteers held a distribution of rice and solar panel sets to residents of Posenchey and Kombol, Cambodia.**

HUANG SHU-ZHEN

More than 30 volunteers gathered before the event to package the lighting kits. Every light bulb was tested to make sure it worked before it was put into a box. Hsieh Ming-hsuan (謝明勳), the head of Tzu Chi Cambodia, demonstrated to the volunteers how to set up the kits so that they would be able to help recipients put together the light sets on the day of the distribution.

On the day of the event, volunteers arrived at the venue in Kombol at 6:30 a.m. Though it was still early, they found that dozens of villagers had already arrived and were waiting for the distribution to start. This showed just how much they were looking forward to receiving the items. Volunteers lined up and sang to welcome attendees. Steamed buns were served so that villagers who hadn't had breakfast could warm up their stomachs. The atmosphere was cordial.



During the event, volunteers explained to the crowd how to install the equipment. Volunteer Zhong Chuan-yu (鍾釗玉) had drawn a user's guide on a piece of paper and copies were distributed to the villagers to help them better understand how to install the devices.

Tep Bros, a 54-year-old recipient, said that though there was electricity in his home, the service was costly. His family was not well-off, and the lighting kit would save them a lot of money. They also wouldn't have to worry when there was a blackout. "I never expected to receive such a good thing. I'm really very happy," he said.

Another recipient, Tep Sarann, said that they had no electricity at home and had to rely on candlelight at night. Her children had to go to a neighbor's home and use the lights there to do their homework. "Now with the solar lighting from Tzu Chi, my kids will be able to study and do homework at home," she said cheerfully.

Volunteer You Hui-lian (游慧蓮) said that when she visited the families before the distribution, she realized just how much they needed the solar panel sets. Some of the families' houses were

built with straw and wooden boards, and using candles to provide illumination was a fire hazard. She felt the lighting kits would improve the recipients' lives and help those families who have electricity at home reduce their electricity expenses.

#### Canada

On July 13, Tzu Chi Canada held a free medical event during which *San Fu Tie* herbal patches were applied to about 500 residents in the Greater Toronto Area.

*San Fu Tie* is a type of treatment used in traditional Chinese medicine (TCM). The treatment involves adhesive patches containing medicine made from a mixture of herbs being placed on various acupuncture points on a patient's body on three specific days in the summer, based on the lunar calendar. The pores on the skin open easily during summer, when the weather is the hottest, allowing the herbal medicine to enter the body more easily

**Tzu Chi Canada held a San Fu Tie herbal patch treatment event on July 13 to help improve people's health.**

ZHENG WEI-YUAN



**Tzu Chi volunteers in Myanmar go to North Okkalapa Hospital every Friday to distribute congee, bread, and eggs to patients.**

PHOTO COURTESY OF TZU CHI MYANMAR

#### Myanmar

Tzu Chi volunteers in Myanmar started distributing rice congee to hospital patients in 2016 when they discovered that some of the patients were too poor to afford regular meals. One of the hospitals that has been receiving this service is North Okkalapa Hospital, located in North Okkalapa Township, Yangon. The hospital can accommodate 1,500 patients, and many impoverished people from remote rural areas receive treatment there. For the last three years, volunteers have distributed congee, bread, and eggs there every Friday.

and achieve the best effect. This therapy is believed to be effective in treating seasonal allergies, respiratory ailments, and other conditions.

Tzu Chi Canada had provided *San Jiu Tie* treatment for volunteers in January. This treatment is similar to *San Fu Tie* but is applied in the winter. Many volunteers said that their allergies had improved after the treatment. When the season to apply *San Fu Tie* approached, Tzu Chi Canada decided to expand the service to include community residents so that more people could benefit.

Volunteers promoted their event through channels including social media. Many people signed up after learning about the event.

The activity was held in conjunction with the Tzu Chi Clinic of Traditional Chinese Medicine, the Humber College Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioner program, and the Canada chapter of the Tzu Chi International Medical Association. Eight doctors, 13 TCM students from Humber College, and 65 volunteers served 503 people at the event.

Although *San Fu Tie* treatment is non-invasive, it doesn't suit all people, so the people who came for the treatment had to be first examined and diagnosed by the doctors. The examination also helped the doctors decide which acupuncture points to use when affixing the herbal patches on a patient.

Patients who were treated on July 13 were required to attend two additional sessions, scheduled for July 20 and August 10.

One patient, Kyi Kyi Thein, told Tzu Chi volunteers on their July 5 visit that she had had to cut down on other expenses to pay her hospital bill, and was therefore very grateful for Tzu Chi's free meal service. A woman who had just given birth to twins expressed the same sentiments. She said that her family was not doing well financially, and so she was delighted to receive the free, nutritious food from Tzu Chi.

Some family members volunteered to help deliver food to patients. Some even gave their contact information to Tzu Chi volunteers, saying that they wanted to join their ranks.

Volunteer Liu Su-ying (劉素英) pointed out that many patients at the hospital are poor and really need the meal service. She has seen patients eat the congee distributed by Tzu Chi for breakfast and save the eggs and bread for dinner to save money. She used to complain about her life, but volunteering for Tzu Chi and witnessing the lives of underprivileged people has taught her to count her blessings.

Volunteer Li Qiu-lan (李秋蘭) and her employees are in charge of preparing the congee and eggs. They get up at four every Friday morning to cook. They prepare the congee in three large pots, which can feed more than a thousand people. The nutritious congee contains vegetables such as corn, carrots, mushrooms, and Jew's ear (a sort of edible fungus). Li said that she doesn't feel that getting up early every Friday to prepare the food is hard work. Instead, she feels blessed because she is healthy enough to serve others.



## Indonesia

A groundbreaking ceremony was held on July 1 for 500 permanent homes Tzu Chi was building for people who had lost their homes to a devastating earthquake and tsunami that struck central Sulawesi in September 2018.

The foundation had launched another reconstruction project earlier this year, with more than 1,300 housing units planned for survivors of the same catastrophes. On March 18, Muhammad Irwan Lapata, the regent of Sigi Regency, visited the Tzu Chi Indonesia office and expressed his hope that the foundation could also build permanent homes for earthquake victims in his regency. The regent explained that the September 2018 temblor had devastated private homes and public infrastructure in Sigi and dealt a hard blow to the local economy. Most survivors were still living in temporary shelters or tents. He had been seeking assistance from government and nongovernmental sectors after the disaster, hoping to help the lives of people in his regency return to normal as soon as possible.

On April 6, the regent and his team visited the Tzu Chi office again to further discuss the project and sign a memorandum of understanding for cooperation. The foundation had decided to build, in the first phase, 500 housing units for quake survivors in Sigi. The government will provide the land and install plumbing and electricity for the new homes, which will be in the village of Pombewe in Sigi. Henri Kusuma Rombe, the head of the Public Works and Public Housing Office of Sigi Regency, cited statistics in the meeting to explain that Pombewe was safe area, very suitable for the construction of permanent housing. The Sigi government hopes to have a total of 1,587 housing units built there to accommodate survivors from four villages.

Ground was broken for the 500 housing units on July 1. Government officials and Tzu Chi volunteers attended the ceremony together. The homes to be built will be earthquake-resistant and each 36 square meters (390 square foot) in area. Dr. H. Wiranto, Indonesia's Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal, and Security Affairs, thanked all sectors of society for working together to help the disaster areas recover. He pointed out that only with the cooperation from all quarters—including the central government, local governments, private organizations, and the general public—would it be possible to complete thousands of homes in a short time.

Andi, a quake victim, expressed his joy at

attending the groundbreaking ceremony. "Our home was destroyed in the quake last year," he said, "but we do not have the ability to rebuild it. Our entire family now lives in tents. This reconstruction project has really brought us hope. I'm overjoyed!"

## Ecuador

After Ecuador was hit by a magnitude 7.8 earthquake in April 2016, Tzu Chi rebuilt a church destroyed in the temblor in the town of Canoa in San Vicente, Manabí Province. The newly constructed church was inaugurated on July 13, 2019.

The reconstruction project included not just the church itself, but living quarters for priests and nuns, classrooms for children's Bible studies, and vocational training classrooms. About 700 people attended the grand opening ceremony. Many local residents were present to witness this important moment for their community. Bishop Eduardo José Castillo Pino, the apostolic administrator of Portoviejo, and Rosanna Cevallos, the mayor of San Vicente, were among the distinguished guests who spoke and thanked Tzu Chi during the ceremony.

Ramon Rosado, born and raised in Canoa, lived with 30 family members in the town. He had watched as the new church was built from scratch and was deeply touched. To celebrate the joyous inauguration, he composed six songs for Tzu Chi and performed them with his band at the ceremony.

**Dr. H. Wiranto, Indonesia's Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal, and Security Affairs, laid the first stone for the foundation at a groundbreaking ceremony for a Tzu Chi housing reconstruction project for quake victims in Sigi Regency, central Sulawesi, Indonesia.**

ANAND YAHYA



ny. Their performance greatly warmed up the atmosphere.

Boris Garcia was the contractor for the church reconstruction project. He had learned about Tzu Chi when the foundation was carrying out post-earthquake relief efforts in the country. Impressed by the love and sincerity of the Tzu Chi volunteers, he had started training to become a certified Tzu Chi volunteer. He took over the church reconstruction project in April 2018, when the original contractor failed to make adequate progress after the groundbreaking ceremony in March 2017. Now, with the project successfully completed, he could proudly say, "Mission accomplished!"

Julián Zamora was the chief engineer for the project. He had thought the church was very

**Tzu Chi undertook a church reconstruction project for the town of Canoa in Ecuador after an earthquake in 2016. An inauguration ceremony for the church was held on July 13, 2019.**

MEN HAI-MEI

beautiful as it was being built, so he wanted to be the first groom married there when it was completed. To that end, he secretly planned to propose to his girlfriend during the opening ceremony. When he made the marriage proposal onstage during the event, the gathered crowd broke into loud cheers. Amidst applause and cheers, Zamora and his fiancée walked through an arch of long-stemmed roses held aloft by Tzu Chi volunteers.

Tzu Chi volunteers from America, including members of the U.S. chapter of the Tzu Chi International Medical Association, not only attended the event but conducted free clinics for people in Canoa and San Mateo, in the city of Manta, Manabí Province. The free clinics were held from July 13 to 16. Joined by medical professionals from Ecuador, they served more than 2,700 patient visits.

The foundation will continue to extend love to the country, and it also hopes that more local people will join in to serve their own people.







**Tzu Chi volunteers held a distribution at Maulana Orphanage School in Epworth, Zimbabwe, on July 5. Supplies such as blankets and rice were distributed to over 700 students.** PHOTO COURTESY OF TZU CHI ZIMBABWE

**Zimbabwe**

Tzu Chi Zimbabwe held two distributions for local impoverished people on July 5 and 13.

The first distribution took place at Maulana Orphanage School in Epworth, about 12 kilometers (7.5 miles) from the city center of Harare, the national capital. Three-fourths of the school's students are orphans. Tzu Chi began extending aid to the school in 2006. Seven hundred twenty-six students benefited from the distribution, receiving supplies including rice, multi-grain powder, blankets, and soap.

During the event, native Tzu Chi volunteers shared with the audience how Tzu Chi had changed their lives with love. Tino Chu (朱金財), the head of Tzu Chi Zimbabwe, encouraged everyone to do good and help each other. Volunteers hoped to give more than just material supplies to the needy; they also wanted to give them hope by inspiring the love in their hearts. Jane Limbo, a parent who had come to the distribution, said that the event taught her how important mutual help was in people's lives.

The other distribution was conducted in Hatfield, located in the south of Harare. When

younger people at the venue saw Tzu Chi volunteers unloading rice from a truck, they pitched in of their own accord to help. Some villagers broke into a song while waiting for the distribution to begin, thanking Tzu Chi volunteers for their help with their singing. Four hundred eighty-five people showed up to receive aid. They were from destitute, disadvantaged families, and some were physically disabled. A local community leader pointed out that Tzu Chi's aid was important to the villagers because most of them could afford only one or two meals a day.

Tambudzai Mufuka joined Tzu Chi as a volunteer in 2013. She had worked hard to help ensure that the distribution went smoothly. She was sad to see so many local people in need of help, but was happy that Tzu Chi was around to help ease their lives.

Priscilla Nhamo, a 72-year-old aid recipient, had been a teacher when she was younger. She's been confined to a wheelchair for the past 15 years, and she has depended on her daughter for care ever since her husband passed away. Unfortunately, her daughter can't work because she has to take care of her. The community leader expressed hope that Tzu Chi could continue to provide aid for underserved people like Nhamo.

The items distributed at this event included rice and soap. Villagers returned home happy after the event ended. ☸

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*The journey of a thousand miles begins with one first  
step. Even a saint was once an ordinary human being.  
—Master Cheng Yen*

PHOTO BY HUANG XIAO-ZHE