

慈濟

# Tzu Chi

## Buddhism in Action



### Crops for Charity

Great Love Farms in Mozambique

September 2021



# Kindness Begins With You

Translated by Teresa Chang



**A vegetarian diet helps us nurture a kind heart. It's also good for the environment and contributes to the well-being of the world as a whole.**

HSIAO YIU-HWA

On the morning of August 14, a magnitude 7.2 earthquake jolted Haiti, killing over 2,000 and injuring more than 12,000. On the heels of the deadly quake, a tropical storm hit the island. My heart ached thinking of the people there without proper shelter to protect them from the wind and rain. Compounding the impact of the disasters is poverty, which is widespread in Haiti. We have some volunteers there working to help local needy people, and volunteers from the U.S. regularly visit to provide assistance and support too, but poor public security makes it difficult to render aid.

Despite breakthroughs in technology, the best earthquake alert systems only provide a few seconds' worth of warning before the shaking starts—and a few seconds doesn't allow people to flee to safety. Before they realize what is happening, the earthquake is upon them. Life is so impermanent; it's hard to predict what will happen next. We must be grateful for each day, even each second, that passes in peace and safety. When we consciously cultivate an attitude of gratitude, our capacity to feel joy and well-being will grow.

Our world is still very much in the grips of the COVID-19 pandemic. People continue to live with a heightened sense of fear and uncertainty. After one and a half years, has humanity awakened to the lesson this pandemic is teaching us? Our unbridled desires, such as those for meat, are causing a backlash. To satisfy their craving for meat, people have devoured countless animals. Estimates have shown that it takes 38 chickens or a single pig to make 500 boxed meals, but our world now has eight billion people. How many animals must be slaughtered to provide just one meal for all those eating meat? The killing required creates an immense amount of bad karma. With that, how is it possible for the world to enjoy peace and be free from disasters?

Animals carry viruses and bacteria, so we can also prevent disease from entering our bodies by avoiding meat. Many medical experts have studied vegetarianism since the pandemic started raging and found that a balanced plant-based diet is good for our health; it offers only benefits and no harm. Mother Nature provides enough grains, vegeta-

bles, and fruit to sustain and nourish us. There is no reason to cause lives to be lost just to feed ourselves.

When I founded Tzu Chi over 50 years ago, I committed myself to working for all living beings. I wanted to save all living beings—not just humans—from suffering. Abstaining from meat shows our love for all living creatures with whom we share this planet. A vegetarian diet helps our love become more complete.

The Buddha taught us to be compassionate, to refrain from killing, and to love and protect all lives. Science supports the wisdom of his teachings too. It is clear the Enlightened One was pointing a right path for us to follow, and yet many people still find it hard to become vegetarian. They just can't tame their craving for meat. In fact, at least 80 billion animals are currently being raised to meet the need for meat consumption globally. Just imagine the sheer amount of water and food needed to raise such a large number of animals—not to mention the impact on the environment of all the carbon dioxide emitted in processes connected with providing meat for consumption.

Today's advanced technology has made receiving and spreading information easy. There is no better time to use such means to spread compassion and nourish wisdom. But what is wisdom? Doing good for the world is wisdom. Some people might be clever but lack wisdom. As a result, they might try to get whatever they want, no matter the cost. They might commit foolish deeds that damage the environment, pollute the air, and that harm or kill living beings, thus contributing to the world's collective bad karma.

Let's all work to tame our desires, rid ourselves of inner impurities, and do things that benefit the world. Vegetarianism is a good way for us to show our love for the world. To nurture a kind heart, we must start by doing no harm to other people, to animals, or to this world. We humans are the most intelligent of all animals. We have the power to relieve suffering and provide a safe haven for everything else. Let's all eat vegetarian and encourage others to do the same. Together, we can create a cleaner Earth, help people have better health, and nurture kindness in everyone's heart. ❀



# Tzu Chi

## Bimonthly

September 2021



- 1 KINDNESS BEGINS WITH YOU**  
Our world is in crisis. Master Cheng Yen encourages us to act now to cultivate kindness for the sake of all living beings and our planet.
- 4 BANDING TOGETHER AGAINST A SHARED THREAT**  
This photo article chronicles how Tzu Chi has acted to help minimize the impact of a recent surge in COVID infections in Taiwan.
- 14 NO ONE IS STRONG ALONE**  
Tzu Chi's Summer Nutritional Support Program exemplifies the benefits that can flow from a collaborative effort among different sec-

tors of society to accomplish a mission of love.

**22 MAINTAINING CONNECTIONS IN THE MIDST OF COVID**  
When Tzu Chi volunteers and social workers had to suspend home visits to the needy due to the pandemic, they turned to calling the underserved to extend a helping hand.

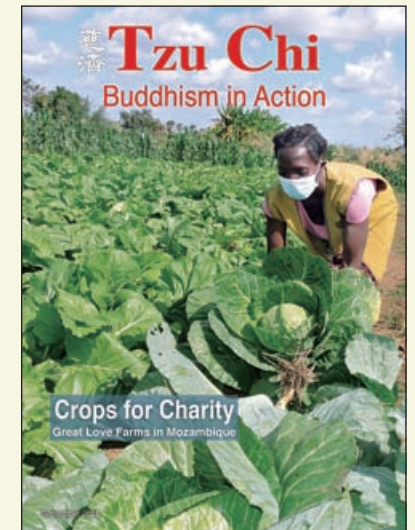
**26 JING SI HALL VACCINE STATIONS PUT PEOPLE FIRST**  
Medical professionals and Tzu Chi volunteers are doing their part to fight the pandemic in Taiwan by making COVID vaccinations an easy and pleasant experience.

- 30 HERBAL TEA DEVELOPED OUT OF COMPASSION**  
This article presents the back story behind Jing Si Herbal Tea, a health drink developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 34 CROPS FOR CHARITY**  
"Alone we go fast, together we go far." Read this account of how native volunteers in Mozambique are putting this saying into practice by feeding their fellow country people.
- 42 THE FIRST THING THEY WANT TO DO WHEN THE PANDEMIC ENDS**  
The COVID wildfire has upended life as usual around the world, but



- Tzu Chi volunteers in Brazil continue to care for the needy through the dark days of the disease.
- 46 AID FOR A SECOND WAVE**  
The pandemic peaked in Indonesia in July 2021 but it is far from over. Tzu Chi Indonesia is doing what it can to help vaccinate the public and help those suffering with COVID-19.
- 50 A TEST**  
This article illustrates the wisdom of how letting go leaves your hands open to receive something new and better.
- 52 LET SINCERITY AND LOVE LEAD THE WAY**  
In this article, Liu Su-mei, CEO of Tzu Chi Indonesia, reflects on her Tzu Chi Path during a Q&A session.
- 60 THE ILLUSTRATED JING SI APHORISMS**  
If you can't change others, then just take care of yourself.
- 61 TZU CHI EVENTS AROUND THE WORLD**  
Tzu Chi brings aid and love to the underserved around the world.

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The *Tzu Chi Bimonthly* is owned and published by the Tzu Chi Culture and Communication Foundation, No. 2, Lide Road, Beitou District, Taipei City 11259, Taiwan.  
Wang Tuan-cheng, CEO  
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For a free copy of the *Tzu Chi Bimonthly*, please contact your nearest Tzu Chi branch office (see inside back cover).

中華郵政台北誌字第910號執照登記為雜誌交寄





# Banding Together Against a Shared Threat

*After enjoying COVID-free lives for over a year, Taiwan experienced a sudden and aggressive rise in community transmissions in May 2021. Pandemic restrictions were enacted to safeguard lives, but such measures inevitably hurt the economy. Inoculation efforts were sped up to allow normalcy to return to society as soon as possible. Tzu Chi has stepped up to help.*

A vaccination site at the Tzu Chi Shanhua office in Tainan. HUANG XIAO-ZHE



# Helping With the Inoculation Program

When the Taiwanese government accelerated its COVID vaccination drive in mid-June, Tzu Chi offered its branch offices and other facilities—20 places in all—to serve as mass inoculation centers. Volunteers have been mobilized to serve on-site. Properly safeguarded with personal protective equipment, they guide people and assist in other ways to help an event go smoothly.







# Setting Up Prefab COVID Screening Stations

Medical professionals work in positive pressure rooms collecting samples from people to be tested for the coronavirus at a COVID screening station that Tzu Chi helped set up at the Tainan Songbo Recreational Center, Tainan. Working in such rooms, health workers are protected from exposure to infections. Tzu Chi erected prefabricated buildings to be used as screening stations as the need for COVID testing rose. By mid-June, 25 such stations had been completed in 11 counties and cities across Taiwan.




## Safety Protocols Woven Into Daily Life

After Taiwan tightened its pandemic restrictions, people had to scan a QR code or provide their contact information when they entered a market (see photo), store, or other venue. This allowed for contact tracing in the event of an infection. Access control was also launched to minimize crowds. Everyone willingly endured such inconveniences in the hope that the pandemic could be reined in as soon as possible.

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## Nutritious Food for Underserved Families

Tzu Chi volunteers and school administrators from Nanhua Junior High School, Tainan, deliver vegetables, fruit, and other food items to a student's home. Working with other organizations, the foundation launched a summer nutritional support program for disadvantaged schoolchildren and their families in late June 2021, benefiting more than 40,000 households across Taiwan.



# No One is Strong Alone

## Working Together to Support Students

By Liao Zhe-min

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Photos by Huang Xiao-zhe

*Tzu Chi's Summer Nutritional Support Program during the pandemic benefits more than underprivileged students and their families—farmers and taxi drivers gain as well. It's a powerful example of how different sectors of society can work together to accomplish a mission of love.*

On a quiet morning, a taxi pulled over to the side of a road in Zhongzheng District, Keelung City, northern Taiwan. The driver, Mr. Wu, got out of his car and called out to a nearby house: "Anybody home? Mr. Chen, please come out and get your supplies!"

A boy of junior high school age emerged from the house in response to the call. Seeing him, the taxi driver added, "There's a lot of stuff here. It'll take two people to move it in." While the boy fetched his mother to help, Wu began to move a couple of heavy boxes from his car. The boy and his mother then got busy lugging in the boxes.

"Okay, that's it! Please sign here," the driver said while handing over a delivery receipt for the mother to sign. The grateful woman couldn't stop thanking Mr. Wu. The delivery to the family done, the taxi driver returned to his place behind the wheel. There were a few more families on his list to deliver to, and he didn't want to waste any time. He took out his cell phone and called the next family to let them know he was on the way, and then he left for his next stop.

The boxes Wu was delivering had originated at the Keelung Fruit and Vegetable Wholesale Market. Earlier that morning, at 2:30, the market was all hustle and bustle. Vendors, their families, and volunteers were inspecting more than 10 kinds of vegetables and fruits before packing them into 1,640 boxes to be delivered to underserved families in Keelung City. Dawn had broken

by the time the enormous task was done, by which time another 1,600 care packages had arrived from Tzu Chi headquarters in Hualien, eastern Taiwan. Each set of food aid to be delivered consisted of a box of fruit and vegetables, two five-kilogram (11-pound) bags of rice, and a care package containing multigrain powder, noodles, and 11 other items. Nearly a hundred taxis and vehicles from a catering company had been enlisted to help make the deliveries and were now lined up on-site, ready to go.

In mid-May, a spike in domestic COVID cases prompted the Taiwanese government to elevate the pandemic alert to level three, the second highest level. The partial lockdown that resulted affected businesses and industries across the board. According to statistics released by the Ministry of Labor on July 8, 2021, the number of businesses forced to cut their work hours due to the pandemic topped 1,800, and the number of people working fewer hours surpassed 25,000. Because people avoided leaving their homes, roadside stall owners and restaurant operators and workers, among others, saw their business seriously affected too. Their incomes were drastically reduced as a result.

"Parents of underprivileged students have likely seen their incomes affected the most by the



COVID crisis," said Julia Lin (林祝里). Lin leads the Keelung City Government's Department of Education. She talked to Tzu Chi about the possibility of distributing meal vouchers or food to underserved students. "I wanted to help the students get support from society so that they could at least have enough food to eat during this trying time," she said.

When school was suspended because of the pandemic, getting enough to eat became a very real concern for many students from low-income families. Many cities and counties in Taiwan issued lunch vouchers or arranged for these students to receive boxed meals at their schools so that they wouldn't go hungry during the day. Such efforts covered their lunches, but Lin requested Tzu Chi's help so that these students didn't have to worry about their dinners either. The foundation decided to go even one step further.

"We felt that providing food to the students didn't go far enough," said Yen Po-wen (顏博文), CEO of the Tzu Chi charity mission. "We wanted our help to cover their families as well. To help

**Vendors pack fresh produce into boxes at the Keelung Fruit and Vegetable Wholesale Market in Keelung, northern Taiwan. The boxes are headed to needy families.**

YE JIN-HONG

keep kids healthy, we decided to provide fruit and vegetables in addition to other kinds of food." Yen explained that 75 percent of the budget the foundation allocated for its charity work in Taiwan in 2021 was to help people through the coronavirus outbreak. That included nutritional support for schoolchildren and helping underprivileged students access on-line learning.

George Chang (張濟舵), deputy CEO of the Tzu Chi charity mission, said that the foundation actively sought to expand its scope of care when coronavirus cases began to surge in Taiwan in mid-May by joining forces with government departments. "We often collaborate with social welfare departments, but this time we're working more with education departments across Taiwan to implement our nutritional support program for





## Tzu Chi Summer Nutritional Support Program

**Beneficiaries:** disadvantaged schoolchildren and their families who have been impacted by the pandemic in 15 cities and counties in Taiwan

**Aid Provided:** each set of food aid includes a care package with 13 items, a box of fruit and vegetables, and two five-kilogram bags of rice

**Participating Cities and Counties:** Keelung City, Yilan County, Changhua County, Yunlin County, Chiayi City, Chiayi County, Tainan City, Hualien County, Taipei City, New Taipei City, Taichung City, Pingtung County, Hsinchu County, Nantou County, and Kaohsiung City

**Feature:** An inter-agency project that combines the efforts of charitable, educational, agricultural, and transportation sectors of Taiwanese society

underserved schoolchildren. Those in the education system know the situations of the children the best.”

After intensive preparations, Tzu Chi reached an agreement with one local government after another to carry out the summer nutritional support program in their area. All told, schoolchildren in 15 cities and counties across Taiwan will benefit from the project. Vegetables, fruit, and other food will be provided to them and their families in July and August. The program kicked off on June 28 in Keelung City, with the other participating cities and counties following close behind in early July.

### Keeping children fed

Chun (a pseudonym) lives in Keelung. She has 11 children. The oldest is fulfilling his compulsory military service while the youngest is still in kindergarten. The mother and her husband make a living by constructing formwork at construction sites and doing cleaning work. Their work, however, dwindled as the COVID situation in Taiwan escalated. The burden to feed their large family was weighty. It’s easy to imagine Chun’s happiness when she received the food aid provided by Tzu Chi in late June.

Because her family is so large, school administrators had applied for double food aid for them. In addition to two boxes of fruit and vegetables and four five-kilogram bags of rice, they received two care packages, each containing red quinoa and brown rice powder, soybean milk powder,

vegetarian meat floss with seaweed, seasoning paste, noodles, multigrain pastry, and other items. Each care package also included a letter from Dharma Master Cheng Yen wishing the recipients well and a copy of *Jing Si Aphorisms*, a collection of short sayings by the Master.

Chun set about inspecting the delivered items as soon as they arrived. “Cabbage is pricy now!” she exclaimed. “Thank you so much. There is such a rich variety of food here. All of these vegetables are things my kids like to eat. They love my stewed mushrooms and Chinese cabbage!”

Nanhua District, in Tainan City, southern Taiwan, is in a mountainous area. The district produces a lot of mangos and longans. Many residents support themselves by growing fruit or doing odd jobs. Zheng, a student who lives in Nanhua and who attends the local Nanhua Junior High School, is a beneficiary of Tzu Chi’s nutritional support program. He has a mentally and physically disabled sister, and his father doesn’t have a steady job. Chen is another student from the same school as Zheng. Her mother originally worked in the Tainan Science Park but had to quit her job because of illness. She now works odd jobs along with her husband at construction sites or orchards. Of the 5,800 needy families in Tainan enrolled in the nutritional support program, eight households were referred to Tzu Chi by Nanhua Junior High School.

In early July, Tzu Chi volunteers transported the care packages and boxes of fruit and vegetables intended for the eight families to the school, then helped school administrators deliver some of the food to those households that couldn’t come to the school to pick up the aid. Everyone worked together to help ensure that underserved families did not go hungry during the pandemic.

**A household in Nanhua, Tainan, southern Taiwan, received food from Tzu Chi in early July 2021 that was enough to last a small family for a month.**



Students and their families enrolled in the nutritional support program received food from Tzu Chi in different ways, depending on where they lived. Care packages in Taipei City, northern Taiwan, for example, were delivered to schools for parents to take home. Shopping vouchers were given to participating families with which they could buy fruit and vegetables at supermarkets.

Taichung City, in central Taiwan, began delivering the first installment of Tzu Chi's food aid to recipient families on July 12. Forty cabs from a taxi company were mobilized on that day to serve more than 400 families in the mountainous areas of Shigang, Dongshi, Heping, and Xinshe. To accommodate the access-control schedules on some roads, some taxi drivers set out bright and early on their delivery trips. Zhang Sen-xiong (張森雄), manager of the taxi company, indicated that the nutritional support program was a very successful collaboration project combining the efforts of different sectors of society. Every driver at his company was happy and grateful to participate in this philanthropic project.

Yunlin County, central Taiwan, is a leading agricultural center on the island. The vegetables delivered to families in the county receiving Tzu Chi's food aid included carrots from Dongshi Township, pumpkins from Sihua Township, and bell peppers and cucumbers from Citong Township. Zhang Yao-yu (張耀裕), of the Dounan Township Farmers' Association, talked about their participation in the nutritional support program: "We spent 72 hours scouring areas across Yunlin County for the agricultural products each area is known for. Then we gathered our selection of vegetables and fruit together, prepared them for recipients, and packed them into boxes for delivery."

The packing was done overnight to ensure the freshness of the produce, which was delivered along with the care packages by taxi drivers to more than 2,100 low-income or needy families in Yunlin County with children attending elementary or junior high schools. The delivery effort started on July 6. Yu Tian-zhu (余天助), a Tzu Chi volunteer in Yunlin, explained that the county is an important region for agriculture and that the foundation's nutritional support program benefited more than underprivileged schoolchildren, but farmers in the area as well. Supplying locally grown produce to local families had the additional perk of a smaller carbon footprint.

Nutritionists were consulted by each city or county government to determine a nutritionally

balanced combination of fruit and vegetables for the participating families. Farmers' associations or fruit and vegetable markets in various areas were entrusted with the responsibility of purchasing and packing. Tzu Chi volunteers and staffers at Jing Si Halls across Taiwan were in charge of packing the care packages. On account of the pandemic, the number of people mobilized to prepare the care packages was kept to as few as possible.

In Nantou County, young people from No Meat helped Tzu Chi volunteers prepare the care packages too. No Meat is an organization founded to promote vegetarianism by holding vegetarian fairs. Two thousand and five hundred care packages were completed in less than five hours with everyone helping. Chelsea Chang (張芷睿), founder of No Meat, and her partners said that they were happy to contribute to the nutritional support program. They served with a selfless, altruistic spirit, sincerely hoping that the program helped needy families and students through the challenges posed by COVID-19.

Liu Qiu-ling (劉秋伶) is part of the Tzu Chi Department of Charity Mission Development. She pointed out that for the first installment of food aid, the foundation needed to prepare about 90,000 five-kilo bags of rice and more than 45,000 care packages, which translated into more than 600,000 food items. Just packing and transporting that number of supplies involved a lot of work. These generous gifts for students were made possible only by a convergence of love from society. They were distributed with the best wishes that participating students could make it through the summer without having to worry about where to find their next meal.

#### Help with online learning

In addition to helping vulnerable students stay fed, Tzu Chi aided with their on-line learning when in-class instruction was suspended as a result of rapidly increasing coronavirus infections. Remote learning began on May 19, even though some students lacked the needed resources to support their at-home learning.

The squeeze that lack of resources put on students and their families is illustrated in the exam-

**The food given to families under Tzu Chi's summer nutritional support program includes fresh fruit and vegetables (upper right, photo by Ye Jin-hong), items such as noodles, multigrain powder, and soybean milk powder (upper left), and rice (bottom).**







Tzu Chi's food aid was delivered in different ways to families in different cities and counties. In Keelung, taxi drivers were engaged to make the delivery trips (left, photo by Ye Jin-hong). In Tainan, volunteers transported care packages to 269 schools in the area (below). School administrators then notified parents to come to the schools to take their food home. Volunteers helped deliver care packages to families that couldn't come to the schools to receive their share of the goods.



**School representatives and Tzu Chi volunteers pose with food aid provided by the foundation at Dacheng Junior High School in Tainan.**

ple of a noodle stand vendor in Zhongshan District, Taipei. The vendor was a foreign woman who had settled in Taiwan after marrying a Taiwanese man. She and her husband were separated, and business was bad due to the pandemic restriction measures, so she had no choice but to fall back on her savings to get by. Tzu Chi volunteer Guo Mei-ying (郭美英) had been extending care to this woman for some time. Guo had phoned her several times after the COVID alert was raised to level three to check on her but could never reach her. It was only later that Guo discovered that the woman didn't have her cell phone with her—her child was using it to attend his on-line class.

Guo quickly applied for a subsidy from Tzu Chi to purchase a notebook computer for the family when she learned about the family's situation. When the woman's child received the computer, he said sweetly, "I'll cherish this computer. And I'll study hard and be a good child. When I grow up and have the ability, I'll help people in need too." Guo was greatly comforted by those words and was delighted to have connected the family to help during this difficult time.

To help make sure that schoolchildren were not deprived of their rights to receive an education during the pandemic, Tzu Chi worked with educational departments in different areas of Taiwan and with other organizations to provide 15,000 wireless routers to children who had no access to the Internet at home. Tzu Chi rented the routers for two months so the children in the program could use them for free to access their schoolwork.

Tzu Chi volunteers in Kaohsiung City, southern Taiwan, took action to help in this area too. Volunteer Xu Qing-zong (許清棕) started collecting second-hand computers when the COVID situation became serious in Taiwan in mid-May. He repaired, maintained, and reassembled them, then gave them to disadvantaged students to use. He has so far donated 70 computers to students from needy families in Kaohsiung and its southern neighbor, Pingtung County.

Volunteer Pan Ji-li (潘機利), also a resident of Kaohsiung, owns a garment retail business. His stores happened to be replacing their computers with new models. He donated the replaced but still serviceable computers—15 of them—to students who needed them. He was pleased that the still usable equipment could serve a good purpose.

Children who received the donated computers

were overjoyed. One example was a brother and sister whose father was serving time in prison. Their mother had to work to support the family, and so the siblings were cared for by their grandmother. When volunteer Ke Xiu-huan (柯琇環) discovered that the brother and sister were taking turns using a cell phone to learn remotely, her heart went out to them. To remedy the situation, she and other volunteers delivered two computers to the children, set the devices up, and connected them to the Internet. "It will be a lot easier for them to do their homework now," the grandmother said gratefully. This is but one example among many of volunteers seeing a need and doing their best to meet it to relieve the plight of underserved people.

The impact of the pandemic is such that no one has been spared. As it is said in the movie *Room*, "No one is strong alone." Mutual help and support are key to pulling everyone through this collective challenge. ☸



# Maintaining Connections in the Midst of COVID

By Leong Imm Chon

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Photo by Hsiao Yiu-hwa

*We had to suspend our home visits to the needy after Taiwan elevated its COVID-19 alert to level three. In their place, we launched care calls to continue providing support to the vulnerable. We learned in the process how a simple phone call can make a big difference to people struggling during the pandemic.*

“Hello, I’m a volunteer/social worker from the Tzu Chi Foundation. I’m calling to check whether your life has been affected by the pandemic. How have you been doing? Is there anything we can do for you?”

After a level three pandemic alert was expanded to the entire island of Taiwan on May 19, 2021, we Tzu Chi members had to put our home visits to the underserved on hold. Instead, we immediately adjusted our modes of care delivery and began phoning families under our long-term care to determine how Tzu Chi could help them during this challenging time. We’ve averaged more than a thousand calls a week in Yilan, Hualien, and Taitung alone. A call might last anywhere from 30 minutes to two hours, as we listen carefully to the families pour out their hearts to us or share with us the problems they have encountered during this difficult time.

I work in the Tzu Chi Department of Charity Mission Development in Hualien. One day, I noticed tears in the eyes of my colleague Xu, a social worker, after she had finished one such care call. She had been talking for two hours. I knew she must have been very thirsty, so I handed her a glass of water. She gulped it down, then said, “It’s a good thing I made that call. The mother I talked to was on the brink of a breakdown. My call appeared to be the breather she needed.”

The woman my colleague had spoken to, Lin, was a kindergarten teacher. She lived with her mom, who was in her 60s, and with her 15-year-

old son, Jie. Jie’s grandmother helped care for him when his mother was at work, but it wasn’t easy. Jie, physically large and strong, was a hyperactive child with a propensity for violence. He often lashed out and hit his grandmother when his temper got the better of him. His violence was not confined to his family either. He once even gave a visiting social worker bruises by pinching her.

When a sudden spike in COVID-19 cases caused all schools in Taiwan to close in May, Lin experienced for the first time what it was like living with her son 24 hours a day. Jie became even more volatile without school to divert him. The lack of visits of his home care provider, suspended due to the pandemic, just made it worse. The boy became like a ticking time bomb, set to explode at any time. Lin and her mother suffered violence from him several times a day. Feeling utterly alone and helpless, Lin’s heart was full of despair. She was in a state of near hysteria when she received the phone call from my colleague. She said she felt like a drowning person who had just caught a piece of driftwood. The phone call and conversation reignited a spark of hope in her.

My colleague told me that she listened most of the time and just offered words of comfort during those two hours of “conversation” with the mother. Lin did most of the talking. At the end of the call, my colleague asked the mother what else Tzu Chi could do to help her. “We’re doing fine financially, so we do not need help in that area,” Lin replied. “All I ask is if you can call me a few times



a week. Your phone call today saved me!” For quite a while after she hung up the phone, my coworker remained emotionally moved. She was happy she could “save” a mother, and perhaps even a family, by being a patient listener for just two short hours.

**When home visits to the needy had to be suspended on account of the pandemic, Tzu Chi volunteers and social workers turned to calling the underserved to extend care and aid.**



## We can make a difference

On another day, I called Yong, a visually impaired care recipient in Ruisui, Hualien. Since he couldn't go out to work during the pandemic, I was concerned about his finances and wanted to find out how he was getting by. When I asked him how he was getting along, he told me he was managing okay financially, but missed going to church. He also missed interacting with people. Even his home care provider wasn't able to enter his home to clean it up—she could only deliver meals to him. He said listening to Master Cheng Yen's Dharma talks was keeping him going.

"Did you hear anything you particularly liked?" I asked.

"The Master teaches us to do good, so I drop money into my coin bank every day to be used to help the needy. The bank is nearly full. When will you come to collect it?"

I told him that we wouldn't be visiting him anytime soon because of the pandemic, but asked him to continue saving money in an empty container when his coin bank was full. Before I said goodbye, I asked if there was anything else we could do for him. He answered, "No. The only thing I want is for one of you people to call me every day for a chat."

I put down the phone overwhelmed with emotion. What he wanted was so simple: just a simple phone call.

Looking out the window at the blue sky outside, I wondered when we will be able to stop wearing masks and return to our life before. I wondered when those of us in Tzu Chi will resume our regular visits to our care recipients. Because of the pandemic, the things we used to take for granted have become more precious now.

I looked at my colleagues around me. Every day, they answer calls on our help hotline or phone families receiving long-term support from Tzu Chi to check on them. Sometimes they get so busy they forget to drink water or go to the restroom. It's impossible not to feel tired after working a day like that. And not only that, but it takes a lot of energy to handle others' negative emotions while keeping their own minds clear and focused so that they can properly address the needs of the people they are talking to and help them solve their problems.

Every day, my coworkers and I repeat what might seem insignificant in others' eyes—talking incessantly on the phones in front of our computers. Those who don't understand our work might think that we are simply chatting our days away.

They don't know that every phone call requires sincerity, patience, and empathy. If we are not emotionally strong enough or lose sight of our aspirations to help others, we wouldn't be able to keep making one phone call after another.

"You must take care too!" Another colleague told me this is what she most often hears from care recipients at the end of calls. She said words like those were like a blessing—they instilled strength in her and helped keep her going. "Lighting a lamp for someone else also brightens your path," as a saying goes. When we extend care to others, we are often rewarded with their warmth. Such warmth brings us hope.

We are lucky, compared with those whose lives have been badly impacted by the pandemic and who receive care from us. We can still do work that helps others, and we are financially secure. The pandemic has furloughed many people or has greatly reduced the hours they can work. Some have even lost their jobs permanently. Schoolchildren can't access online learning while their schools are closed because they lack the resources. All kinds of problems can crush a family or throw their lives into disarray.

I remember something that Master Cheng Yen once said on an occasion when volunteers were looking back on the charitable path of Tzu Chi and sharing what they had experienced along the way: "During the September 21 Earthquake or Typhoon Herb, the power of nature really hit home. We human beings are so small and insignificant in the face of such destructive power. But even though we are small and insignificant, we can still do great things and make a difference."

As it is with nature, we might feel small and insignificant in the face of the ruthless COVID-19 pandemic. But as small and insignificant as we may be, we can still help others every day. Take my coworkers and me as an example. We can call needy families and check if they are doing okay. We can tell them they can turn to Tzu Chi for assistance any time they need a helping hand. We can let them know that we are here for them when the going gets tough. Despite being small and insignificant, we can be superheroes for others as we lovingly form a safety net, catching every falling family and seeing them through the critical time of the pandemic.

Faced with the severe challenge of the pandemic, we don't need people with super powers. There lives in each of us a superhero capable of lending a hand to those in need. ♣

# Helping COVID Patients

Compiled by Ye You-hua

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

In a convenience store, a female customer browsed the shelves, picked out some items, then carried her selections up to the counter to pay. She was a social worker; instead of shopping for herself, she was picking up daily necessities for COVID patients who had checked into a hospital in a hurry, and had had no time to prepare things they would need for their hospitalization.

Wu Fang-qian (吳芳茜), director of the social services office at Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital, said that every social worker at the hospital had to take on dozens of additional patient cases when the number of COVID infections spiked in Taiwan in mid-May. "Caring for COVID-19 patients is very different from caring for other patients," she pointed out.

Because COVID patients must be treated in isolation, social workers cannot talk to them face-to-face to understand and address their needs. They instead rely on messaging apps to talk and maintain contact with patients. Besides preparing daily necessities for patients during their hospitalization, social workers offer them emotional support, help connect them with government and private social welfare resources, and check on them after they've been discharged from the hospital. Such check-ups may last anywhere from a week up to a month following their hospital stay.

Social worker Yang Hui-yi (楊惠儀) recalled a middle-aged man who was admitted into Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital along with his father, who was in his 80s. Both had been diagnosed with the coronavirus. On the day he checked into the hospital, the son's company told him that they would find someone to fill in for him at work, but not long after that, they sent quite a different message: "You don't have to return to work." Losing his job was hard enough, but wasn't as bad as what came next: his father's condition continued to deteriorate despite treatment. Eventually the older man succumbed to the disease.

According to law, his body was cremated within 24 hours. The son, still hospitalized with

COVID, was unable to arrange for his funeral. He was filled with great sadness and regret at not being able to perform this last service for his dad. "He cried and blamed himself for failing to take better care of his father," Yang said. "He regretting letting his father go out to shop for groceries [thus exposing himself to risks of COVID infection]."

Knowing that he had been dismissed by his company, Yang talked several times with the son about his future arrangements. After 14 days of treatment, the man recovered and prepared to leave the hospital. "I have only a few hundred New Taiwan dollars on me—not even enough to pay my taxi fare," he said to Yang. "What should I do?" Yang comforted him and helped him apply to the Tzu Chi Foundation for emergency financial aid and daily supplies.

On the day the man stepped out of the COVID care ward, a nurse walked towards him holding a care package and a gift pack from Tzu Chi. The packages contained enough food to last him for a month. The man's eyes filled up with tears as he gratefully accepted the gifts.

Many people have lost their jobs or, worse, their family due to the pandemic. Some people continue to face challenges even after they have recovered from the infection and are discharged from the hospital. Social worker Lin Jia-de (林家德) said that many recovered COVID patients worry that people around them might discriminate against them. Should they lose their jobs, their lives would become even more difficult. "For this reason, it is important to connect them with financial aid offered by the government or private sectors if they need such assistance," Lin explained. "At the very least, we must help them get by during their quarantine period at home."

These COVID patients, from the time they were admitted into Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital until they were discharged, never got to meet the social workers who helped care for them. But their hearts, weighed down by their illness and all that went with it, were greatly soothed due to the help of these social workers. ♣



# Jing Si Hall Vaccine Stations Put People First

By Zhang Yu-fan

Translated by Tang Yau-yang

Photos by Chen Zhong-hua

*Medical professionals and support volunteers work together to make COVID vaccination a pleasant experience at inoculation sites at Tzu Chi Jing Si Halls. Every person present, the workers and the public alike, is doing their part in holding the pandemic at bay.*

A nurse, decked out in personal protective equipment (PPE), stood next to a car in the sun one June afternoon in the parking lot of the Tzu Chi Sanchong Jing Si Hall in New Taipei City, northern Taiwan. She soaked a cotton ball in alcohol, bent down, and began carefully disinfecting a spot on the upper arm of an elderly woman, Ms. Lin, who was sitting in the back seat. The nurse was prepping her for her COVID vaccine injection.

After gently disinfecting the spot for 30 seconds, the nurse looked up at Lin and said softly, “I’m giving you the shot now. Take a deep breath.” The nurse carefully explained each step of the vaccination process to her to reduce her anxiety. Lin was 91 years old, so the medical team was being extra careful. Standing beside the car

were three other workers, also in full PPE, explaining to Lin’s family things to look out for after the shot.

A nationwide COVID-19 vaccination campaign was launched in Taiwan on June 15, 2021. In response to the request of local governments, Tzu Chi volunteers have served as guides at government-designated vaccination stations. The foundation also offered 20 facilities in 11 counties and cities across Taiwan to be used as vaccination centers. Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital mobilized their doctors and nurses to help staff the vaccination stations at Jing Si Halls in Xindian, Shuanghe, Sanchong, Banqiao, and Luzhou, all in New Taipei City. Working with Tzu Chi volunteers and other on-site helpers, healthcare workers from the hospital provide professional services and tender care in comfortable settings to boost Taiwan’s vaccination rate.

## Caring volunteers reassure the elderly

People over the age of 85 were the first group to be inoculated. In the lobby of the Sanchong Jing Si Hall, Tzu Chi volunteers wearing full protec-

**Ms. Lin, 91 and bedridden for many years, came in a car to the Sanchong Jing Si Hall in New Taipei City to receive her COVID shot. Considering her restricted mobility, medical workers went to the car she came in—parked in the parking lot—to vaccinate her.**

COURTESY OF LUO MEI-ZHU



tive clothing kept a close eye on things. When they saw vaccine recipients in the observation area preparing to leave, they stepped forward to express their care and offer a last-minute reminder: “Ma’am/Sir, be careful on the way home. Remember to drink plenty of water and get lots of rest.” After a vaccine recipient had left, a waiting volunteer used a blue-ray disinfectant spray gun and a rag to carefully sanitize the vacated chair for the next user.

There were Tzu Chi volunteers and other workers on-site to guide people through the entire process from beginning to end. They helped recipients check in, fill out personal information forms, consult with a doctor, receive the shot, and so on. Veteran volunteer Luo Mei-zhu (羅美珠), coordinator of the on-site services, pointed out that many changes had been made thoughtfully at the Jing Si Hall to make it easier for the elderly to use the facilities. For example, all Jing Si Halls have wooden flooring, and in normal times people are expected to take off their shoes when they enter, according to Asian tradition. But during the inoculation sessions, vaccine recipients were allowed to walk into the Jing Si Hall with their shoes on. To protect the floor, volunteers had put thin wooden sheets or floor mats on top of the floor-

**A scene at the inoculation site at the Sanchong Jing Si Hall. Medical workers and support volunteers work together to make COVID vaccination a pleasant experience for vaccine recipients.**

ing. Anti-slip devices were also installed in case of rainy days.

Chao You-chen (趙有誠), superintendent of Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital, described another strategy to make the vaccination experience more positive for the elderly. He said vaccination venues that served larger crowds, such as the Jing Si Halls in Sanchong and Xindian, were equipped with medical-care carts and rolling chairs for medical workers so that they could easily move from one person to another. This minimized the frequency that the elderly had to move around on-site; they could remain seated while workers came to them for pre-vaccination consultation or inoculation. This vaccine administration method, dubbed the “Umi-machi style,” was invented in the town of Umi in Fukuoka Prefecture, Japan, and made getting vaccinated much easier for people who had trouble moving around easily.

Another thoughtful setup was a separate zone for people who came in wheelchairs—once





they were pushed to the zone, they received their shots in place and stayed there for rest and observation.

Zhang Kai-yan (張凱雁), a nursing administrator from Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital, explained that people would see clear instructions on where to check in as soon as they arrived at the Sanchong Jing Si Hall. After their identity had been confirmed, they completed a Vaccination Evaluation and Intention Form, then underwent a consultation with a doctor. The doctor evaluated whether they were suitable for vaccination by asking about their medical history, whether they had allergies, and the medications they were taking. The physician would also explain possible side effects before the injection. After the shot was administered, the nursing staff noted the observation time on a form, and pharmacists would dispense fever medicine just in case it was needed.

Many people had already gathered in front of the main entrance of the Sanchong Jing Si Hall by 6:30 a.m. on the first day of the vaccination drive. Zhang observed that many older folks were accompanied by their children. She said, "Many

**Medical workers wear their photos and names on their chests to identify themselves. This is out of respect for and to make vaccine recipients feel more secure while being vaccinated.**

people treated the vaccination of their elderly loved ones with great caution." They worried about their seniors being vaccinated, but were more concerned about the risks of not being vaccinated. Zhang said that someone even wrote the following on a Vaccination Evaluation and Intention Form: "Our whole family has discussed and decided to let our mother be vaccinated."

Medical staffers did everything possible to make the inoculation process easier for those who came for the shots, especially people with special needs. Mr. Lin, who brought his bedridden mother, was relieved. He had been worried that he would not be able to get his mother out of his car for the shot all by himself, but when he told a worker in the check-in area about his situation, a special service was provided to his mother. Medical workers went directly to his car to give

his mother the shot. Volunteers also went to his car to check on his mother during the observation period after the shot. All this thoughtfulness really warmed his heart.

### Medical outreach

When the pandemic flared up in Taiwan in May 2021, Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital took in infected patients, assumed responsibility for a quarantine hotel for COVID patients with mild symptoms or no symptoms, and set up a community COVID screening station near the entrance of the hospital. Zhang Kai-yan explained that the hospital even reduced its non-emergency medical services so it could take in more COVID patients.

The hospital also enlisted employees to take part in the vaccination program, though such participation was voluntary. Responses from staffers at the dialysis center and the health examination center were especially enthusiastic. Very soon all the available slots were taken. For the vaccination drive for the over-85 age group, the hospital mobilized about 250 physicians, nurses, pharmacists, and administrative staffers every day to support the inoculation efforts.

The help of Tzu Chi volunteers was also needed at vaccination sites offered by the foundation. Priority was given to those with experience volunteering in Tzu Chi hospitals and who were therefore more knowledgeable in how to protect against infections. Participation was voluntary and the family of each prospective volunteer had to first give consent. Luo Mei-zhu said that she was told that about ten volunteers would be needed each day at the vaccination station at the Sanchong Jing Si Hall. She phoned some medical volunteers who had been vaccinated and who lived close to the Jing Si Hall to ask about their

willingness to participate. After just a few phone calls she had enlisted enough people to help.

On the first day of the vaccination program, all workers wore full PPE, medical professionals and support volunteers alike. It was difficult for people to tell them apart. On the second day, Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital decided to put photos and names on medical workers' protective clothing so that it would be easier for vaccine recipients to learn who was serving them.

Superintendent Chao You-chen stated that it was out of respect for vaccine recipients that they made that decision. Being able to put a name and face to the medical professional serving them would enhance the seniors' sense of security and trust. Doctors also briefly introduced themselves before providing consultations. Ms. Chen, who accompanied her mother to the Sanchong Jing Si Hall to receive her shot, praised such thoughtful arrangements. She said that such considerations helped her mother and her feel more at ease.

The temperature during summer in Taiwan can easily soar to 36 degrees Celsius (97 degrees Fahrenheit). Volunteers placed large electric fans and ice cubes in the outdoor canopied area to bring down the temperature so people waiting there would be more comfortable. Volunteers also handed out bottled water. In the check-in area, Luo Mei-zhu saw many people showing up with parasols and folding canvas chairs, but in the end such items weren't needed. Volunteers had set up the venue in a way so as to accommodate the needs of not just vaccine recipients but also their families. A local official who was helping on-site said that he felt very fortunate to have been assigned to serve at a Jing Si Hall. Not only did Tzu Chi volunteers help him with his work, but the smiles on the faces of the medical workers made him feel happy and warm.

People were touched by the good services offered at a Tzu Chi vaccination site, as evidenced by this example: after accompanying an older family member to a Jing Si Hall to receive her shot, a young man returned later amidst heavy rains to the venue to donate money to Tzu Chi. It was his way of thanking the on-site workers. His kind gesture, extending the gratitude he felt by paying forward the care his family member had received, warmed everyone. ☸



**Volunteer Luo Mei-zhu (left) warmly greets a woman who has arrived at the Sanchong Jing Si Hall for her COVID shot.**



# Herbal Tea Developed Out of Compassion

By Chen Li-an

Abridged and translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

*Jing Si Herbal Tea is the brainchild of a joint effort between professionals of Western medicine and traditional Chinese medicine. The health drink was developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and contains an effective mixture of eight herbal medicines, but its origin was in something much closer to the heart: compassion.*

For more than a year, since the pandemic began, the Tzu Chi Foundation has donated items to front-line workers in the fight against the coronavirus. Such items have included personal protective equipment, multigrain powder, and instant rice. But in late 2020, the foundation added Jing Si Herbal Tea, a health drink, to its list of items for donation. The tea was based on a traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) compound formula developed by professionals of TCM and Western medicine at Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital, eastern Taiwan. The team that developed the

drink hoped to convey with it their best wishes for a world ravaged by the coronavirus. By July 2021, Jing Si Herbal Tea had been delivered, along with other COVID aid provided by Tzu Chi, to 33 countries and regions.

Since COVID-19 broke out, healthcare experts around the world have racked their brains to

**Tzu Chi donated Jing Si Herbal Tea—in concentrated liquid form—to the Border Affairs Corps of Taiwan's National Immigration Agency.**

LI MING-LIN



think of ways to battle the virus. Specialists in traditional Chinese medicine have joined in the effort too. As a result of the latter's efforts, a variety of anti-coronavirus health products based on TCM formulas have appeared on the market. Given that, what is so special about the herbal tea developed by Tzu Chi?

## The research project

In March 2020, when the coronavirus started sweeping the world, everyone felt anxious, fearful, and helpless. Hoping to do something to help, Dharma Master Cheng Yen asked Tzu Chi healthcare professionals to develop an herbal tea using the wisdom of traditional Chinese medicine to help protect people's health.

In response to the Master's request, a team was formed at Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital for research and development. The group was led by Lin Pi-yu (林碧玉), vice president of the Tzu Chi Foundation, and Lin Shinn-zong (林欣榮), the hospital's superintendent. Other members included Ho Tsung-jung (何宗融) and Huang Chih-yang (黃志揚), vice superintendents of Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital, as well as the TCM team at the hospital, and the research group in the hospital's Cardiovascular and Mitochondrial Related Disease Research Center.

**Medical workers from Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital help pack Jing Si Herbal Tea during a training event for hospital employees.**

CHEN YI-LIN

Vice superintendent Huang Chih-yang explained that their research objective was to develop a formula that could stop a virus from entering a cell, suppress the multiplication of a virus, regulate cytokine storms—a sudden onslaught of proteins secreted by the immune response that overwhelms the immune system—and deter tough variants. The group of health professionals first used Chinese medicinal herbs to develop several compound formulas, then tested them for their effectiveness. Vice superintendent Ho Tsung-jung, who is also the head of the TCM department at Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital, said that the key to successfully developing such a formula was inspired directly by Master Cheng Yen.

Dr. Ho explained that when the research team was briefing the Master on the progress of their work during a meeting, she shared with them a remembrance from her childhood. She said that back when Taiwan was still an agricultural society, people believed that plants such as Chinese mugwort and *Desmodium caudatum* could ward off evil spirits and disease. When people went out to



visit patients, clean their ancestors' tombs, or visit grieving families, they'd pick *Desmodium* and take it with them. When they returned home, they'd boil some *Desmodium* in water and use the liquid to cleanse and purify themselves. "What people back then thought could 'ward off evil spirits' might actually have been effective in fighting harmful bacteria or poisonous substances," the Master said. She suggested that the research team study those two plants to see if they did have such effects.

Following the Master's suggestion, the team added the two herbs to a formula they were working on and conducted tests on it. "The test results showed that the addition of those two plants heightened the effects of the formula in stopping a virus from entering a cell," said Dr. Ho. "It really

came as a great surprise to us."

The final herbal tea formula the group's research eventually produced contained eight ingredients. In addition to the two plants mentioned above, other components include mondo-grass, fish mint, platycodon, Chinese licorice, perilla leaves, and chrysanthemum. Dr. Ho shared that the research team discovered that these herbs complement one another when used together, each working better than if they were used alone.

Ho added that traditional Chinese medicine stresses the importance of balancing yin and yang (roughly, "darkness and light"). When yin and yang are in balance, good health follows. "When a person lacks positive energy, they need 'yang' to boost it," he observed. Using the eight herbal ingredients of the Jing Si tea as an example, he explained that when the ingredients are combined, they work to "support the positive and eliminate the bad." The brew is good to drink regularly to protect one's health.

#### Its purpose is to help people

Though Jing Si Herbal Tea is made purely from Chinese herbs, the Master often expresses her wish that Chinese and Western medicine can complement each other. That's one reason she puts a premium on studying Chinese herbs.

Dr. Ho explained that many medications used in Western medicine are made from herbs employed in Chinese medicine. Examples include shikimic acid, extracted from star anise to use as an ingredient in flu medicine, and artemisinin, extracted from the plant *Artemisia annua*, also known as sweet wormwood, to make anti-malarial medicine. Even Superintendent Lin Shinn-zong, a Western medicine practitioner specializing in

**South Africa has been the African country hit hardest by the pandemic. In early March 2021, a Tzu Chi rehabilitation facility in Tembisa, Johannesburg, reopened. Volunteers there received Jing Si Herbal Tea—in tea bag form—sent by Tzu Chi headquarters in Taiwan.**

COURTESY OF TZU CHI SOUTH AFRICA



neuroscience and neurosurgery, once used extracts from Chinese angelica, an herb commonly used in TCM, as one of the ingredients in the development of a new medicine.

Ho admitted that when they first launched their research project, many people doubted they would succeed. Such misgivings came from all quarters—those practicing Western medicine, others following traditional Chinese medicine, even Tzu Chi volunteers themselves. Despite such doubts, the research team threw themselves into the project and did their very best. They knew it was the Master's compassion, her wish to help boost people's health and ease suffering during the pandemic, that had launched the project. "The purpose of the drink was to help people, not to make profits," Ho said. Resonating with such thoughts, the team went all out and eventually brought the project to fruition.

"When I asked some nuns at the Jing Si Abode [the Buddhist convent founded by Master Cheng Yen] where to obtain the herbs to make the drink in large quantities," said Ho, "they told me, 'They're already being grown.' I asked them where the seeds had come from, and they said

**Under the guidance of experts, volunteers planted fish mint and *Desmodium caudatum* at the Tzu Chi Gangshan Campus, southern Taiwan. The herbs are two of the ingredients of Jing Si Herbal Tea.** WANG FU-SHOU

Tzu Chi volunteers had provided them for free." Within two months, the herbs grown to make the drink were being harvested. "We were impressed by the efficiency of everything," Ho added. Production of the drink was fast-tracked so it could be used to help people as soon as possible.

In addition to the herbs grown on Tzu Chi farms, other herbs used to make the drink are purchased from all over Taiwan. Jing Si Pureland Company was responsible for the drink's volume production. Jing Si Herbal Tea is now available to the public in powder, concentrated liquid, and tea bag forms. It is safe to ingest and has almost no side effects.

Everyone who has participated in the invention and production of Jing Si Herbal Tea hopes to help safeguard the public's health and contribute to the well-being of people suffering due to the pandemic.





# Crops for Charity

By Yeh Tzu-hao

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Photos courtesy of Tzu Chi Mozambique

*Natural disasters, conflict, and the pandemic are pushing people in Mozambique deeper into food insecurity. Read how Tzu Chi volunteers in the country are leading their fellow Mozambicans to grow food for the vulnerable.*

It was July 2021. Twenty mask-wearing villagers were hard at work on a large plot of farmland in Metuchira, Sofala Province, Mozambique, located on the southeastern coast of Africa. April to September is the dry season in Mozambique, and rain had not graced Metuchira for some time. Even so, the vegetables on the farm had grown well. Different volunteers worked on the farm every day; today's group were happily harvesting Chinese broccoli and cabbages. Seeing how the vegetables had flourished, the 20 volunteer villagers sang with joy.

Carrying the harvested produce on their heads, the volunteers headed back to their village,

still singing. Once there, they started sorting the vegetables into one container after another to distribute to the needy. They were happy knowing the results of their hard work would help ease the recipients' food insecurity for the next few days.

## Giving back

In many people's minds, Africa is the Dark Continent, long plagued by famine and political turmoil. Caucasian or Asian people wearing clothing bearing the names of United Nations agencies or non-government organizations (NGO) distributing food and other aid to long lines of African people is a familiar picture to many. In such scenarios, the contrasting roles of givers and receivers are as clear-cut and distinct as can be.

Some villagers in Mozambique's Sofala Province, however, have switched from being merely aid recipients to aid providers. After receiving food aid in distributions, they turn around and donate some of their share to help other underserved people. Some donate their spare change too, or even volunteer on farms to tend to vegetables grown for distribution to needy households.

Those that understand the challenges facing Mozambique might ask, "Why are they helping others? Aren't they in need of help themselves?" After all, the country has suffered its fair share of misfortune. It was pummeled by Cyclone Idai in March 2019. The central part of the nation, where Sofala Province is located, was among the hardest hit areas. Cyclones Chalane and Eloise hit the nation again in the space of about three weeks at the end of 2020 and the beginning of 2021, leading to severe flooding in the central region of the nation. In sharp contrast, other parts of the country have suffered from persistent drought. As if the ravages of these natural disasters weren't bad enough, the nation has been afflicted with conflict and unrest in recent years as well. An Islamist insurgency was launched in the northern province of Cabo Delgado in 2017, killing thousands and displacing hundreds of thousands.

Natural disasters, conflict, and the invisible yet insidious COVID-19 virus have devastated livelihoods in Mozambique, resulting in hunger for many people. After Cyclones Chalane and Eloise,

**The three Great Love Farms in Metuchira, Sofala Province, Mozambique, yield different vegetables every month. Volunteers sowed lettuce seeds in May and harvested the crop two months later. The harvested vegetables were distributed to the needy.**





the government of Sofala Province appealed to the Tzu Chi Foundation and other NGOs for help. In response, Tzu Chi “adopted” three affected regions in the Nhamatanda District for an aid project. The foundation has carried out charity work in that district since Cyclone Idai in 2019. The Tzu Chi Great Love Farm mentioned at the beginning of this article is located in one of the three regions, Metuchira.

In July this year, Tzu Chi volunteers handed out aid to 2,537 families in Metuchira, Nhamatanda, and Lamego in the Nhamatanda District in follow-up distributions for victims of the two cyclones. Each family received 25 kilograms (55 pounds) of corn flour, ten kilograms (22 pounds) of rice, peanuts, beans, oil, salt, and soap. The total weight of the items each household received came to 51 kilograms (112 pounds).

In previous distributions and while working in the Nhamatanda District, volunteers had provided food and crop seeds to local needy families, and shared with them farming knowledge and the importance of self-sufficiency, mutual help, love, and altruism. Even though the villagers coming to the distributions needed help themselves, some of

them donated a portion of the aid they had received during the distributions back to Tzu Chi to help other needy people. They had remembered the spirit of giving on which Tzu Chi was founded—that small sums of money, when pooled together, could be used to do great good—and modeled their own giving on that idea. All told, 229 people donated back to Tzu Chi 344 kilograms of corn flour, which was used to help an additional 214 households. Even though less than two kilograms of corn flour was given to each of those 214 households to maximize the reach, the kind generosity of the donors, who had long been afflicted with poverty, was inspiring and particularly uplifting.

**A large team of farm volunteers**

Among Tzu Chi’s work in the Nhamatanda District, the establishment of farms is especially

**A volunteer harvests cabbages on a Great Love Farm. No chemical pesticides or fertilizers are used. Volunteers work in shifts tending to and watering the crops.**

noteworthy. Denise Tsai (蔡岱霖), originally from Taiwan and the first Tzu Chi volunteer in Mozambique, explained that the idea of cultivating crops to help feed local needy people came from Dharma Master Cheng Yen: “The Master said that where there are people and land, crops can be grown as food.” Tsai said that the Master encouraged her to use available land to grow food to aid the vulnerable in Mozambique and to share the spirit of kindness and compassion with local people. “With good people and good land, good results will be achieved,” the Master had told her.

Following the Master’s advice, Tsai and her husband, Dino Foi, a Mozambican, started leading native volunteers in 2014 to grow vegetables and fruit on a piece of land at the Tzu Chi Home in Mahotas, Maputo, Mozambique’s capital. Tsai also began holding gatherings under trees at the Tzu Chi Home to share the guiding principles of Tzu Chi and the teachings of the Buddha and the Master.

After Cyclone Idai in 2019, volunteers from Maputo introduced the idea of growing food to help the needy to people in Metuchira. Tzu Chi obtained two hectares of land in Metuchira to

use as farmland and called on local villagers to join in the charitable farming project. Over a thousand people signed up and began volunteering on the farm.

Their work has paid noticeable dividends, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. President Filipe Nyusi of Mozambique declared a national state of emergency in response to the pandemic, effective from April 1, 2020. Related precautionary measures enacted by the government caused many people to lose their jobs and forced them to leave the cities where they worked to return to their hometowns. The vegetables grown on the Tzu Chi farm in Metuchira helped prevent many people returning to their hometown of Metuchira from going hungry.

Karmen Long (龍嘉文) is a member of the Tzu Chi International Medical Association and once spent an extended period of time in Mozambique. She wrote in an article that because the 1,700

**Great Love Farm volunteers in Metuchira. The success of Great Love Farms depends on the work of many volunteers.**  
KARMEN LONG







All volunteers on the Great Love Farms in Metuchira are from the area. They know which local household consists of an elderly woman supporting several grandchildren alone and where lives a single mother working hard to fend for her children. After picking vegetables from the farms, volunteers deliver them to such underserved families (right). A large variety of vegetables are grown on the Great Love Farms. While cabbages and lettuce might be harvested one month, beans, corn, cucumbers, and tomatoes might be harvested the next. Recipients often get a pleasant surprise when they receive vegetables from Tzu Chi (above).



## Sofala Province

- The location of seven Tzu Chi Great Love Farms, with a combined area of 33.5 hectares
- The farms rely on volunteers for cultivation. More than 2,000 villagers work in shifts to weed, fetch water for irrigation, and take care of other farm work.
- Harvested produce is distributed to the needy.

## Maputo

- The location of the Tzu Chi Home
- Fruit and vegetables are grown in open ground at the home and distributed to the needy.

people who volunteered on the Great Love Farm in Metuchira were from the village themselves, they knew best where the needy people in the village lived. “After every harvest, farm volunteers visited families most in need of help and took them tomatoes and other vegetables picked from the farm,” Dr. Long recorded. “By the end of October [2020] they had made enough distributions to benefit 3,600 people.” The success of the farm greatly encouraged every volunteer.

The importance of developing reliable food sources locally in Mozambique was magnified by the pandemic. The country relies heavily on South Africa for its food needs. When the latter reduced its food exports during its own pandemic lockdown measures, food prices in Mozambique spiked. Such a development highlighted for the volunteers the risk of relying on food imports to sustain themselves.

To enlarge the farm areas that could be cultivated to grow food for the underserved, Tzu Chi volunteers sought out landowners in Sofala Province that would be willing to provide their land for Tzu Chi to use. Such efforts paid off. In addition to the first farm in Metuchira, the foundation now has two more farms in the village. All three farms are now being used. Volunteers have also acquired four more pieces of land, two each in Nhamatanda and Lamego. The combined area of the seven parcels of land comes to 33.5 hectares, the equivalent of 47 soccer fields.

“The landowners who agreed to provide their land to us each has two to four hectares of land,” Denise Tsai explained. “It is beyond them to cultivate their land to grow crops because they are too old. They need water to raise crops, but the

amount of water they can fetch from a river or well is not even enough to sustain their household needs, such as that for cooking. How is it possible for them to get enough extra water to irrigate their land? That’s why they were willing to lend their land for free to Tzu Chi to help their own fellow villagers.”

Tsai’s explanations revealed that a big issue for farming in Sofala Province is water supply.

In fact, Mozambique receives no less rainfall than Taiwan, which is known for its agriculture. The problem is that the African country has very distinct dry and rainy seasons. When the weather is dry, it’s dry for an extended period. During such times, farmers can only fetch water from wells or rivers to use. Ordinarily, that solution is not tenable on a large scale. But, Tsai said, “We have more than 2,000 volunteers to fetch water from wells or rivers for our farms. Ours is a tremendous team effort.”

## Yes, we can!

With the loving irrigation of so many people, land that might have gone to waste has been transformed into bountiful farms. Volunteers put in a lot of thought when it came to deciding what crops to plant. The local staple, corn, is one of the crops volunteers grow. “Corn flour can keep a lot of people fed,” Denise Tsai said. “Volunteers always sing and dance to express their gratitude when they are having the sun-dried corn ground for flour.”

But besides keeping people fed, nutrition is important. For that reason, vegetables such as pumpkins, tomatoes, and sweet potato leaves are also grown. They contain a rich array of vitamins.



Peanuts are raised for the oil and protein they provide. Because they are such an excellent source of plant-based protein, peanuts also help support a vegetarian diet, which Master Cheng Yen has long been promoting.

As might be expected, good management of the farms is essential to maximizing yields. Tsai and Dino, her husband, selected young people from among Tzu Chi staffers and volunteers to study English and management and receive training in computer applications and other skills needed to manage the farms. These young people did not disappoint the couple; they do a good job managing the farms. They tabulate the crop varieties of each farm, the amounts of seeds used, the dates the seeds are planted, their germinating rates, the estimated harvest dates, the projected crop yields, and more. They also schedule time for weeding and watering and organize farm volunteers into shifts, limiting the number of people for each shift to adhere to the government's COVID safety protocols.

"Their tabular forms even include such information as what vegetables are delivered on which date to which neighborhood," Tsai observed. "Though they still have room to improve, I've been greatly impressed by how mindfully they have recorded everything and managed the farms."

While the young people using modern skills to run the farms have been a comfort to Tsai, a group of 18 volunteers from Maputo have earned themselves even greater admiration from Tsai. These volunteers have been taking turns going to Sofala Province and staying there for extended periods to help Tzu Chi carry out relief and reconstruction work after Cyclone Idai.

Tsai said that those 18 native volunteers are just ordinary people in the lower strata of society, and that like many other people in Mozambican society, they make a living doing odd jobs or farming. And yet, when it comes to serving and helping others, they demonstrate an eager willingness that is truly impressive. All had undergone training and received their volunteer certification. And Tsai still vividly remembers how they all bravely raised their hands in a meeting when a question was put to everyone present whether they were willing to go to Sofala to stay for long periods of time to help implement Tzu Chi work-relief programs there and help victims of Cyclone Idai. "Yes, we can!" they said with enthusiasm.

Many native Tzu Chi volunteers in Mozambique, most of them poor, have demonstrated with their action the truth of Master Cheng

Yen's saying: "With resolution comes strength." Though most of them can't read a single Chinese character, they absorb the Master's translated teachings. Most importantly, they live out the Master's teachings by putting their love into action and inspiring more people to join them to help their neighbors and fellow country people.

### Philanthropic farming

Talking about the farms Tzu Chi has established, Tsai stressed the importance of helping local people recognize the significance of building their own food system, of making use of the land they have to build resilience into their own communities and help tackle the problem of food insecurity. At the same time, she stressed the importance of sharing positive values and principles in local communities.

Using the Great Love Farms as an example, she explained that if volunteers hadn't shared with local villagers such positive values as mutual help, the villagers might have picked vegetables from the farms and taken them home for themselves instead of leaving them for the needy. They might even have fought with each other to get bigger shares from the farms. If that had happened, Tzu Chi would not have been able to keep the farms going.

"We share with them that our lives will be a lot better if we can help each other," Tsai said, "and that if we help others today, others will do the same for us when we need a hand."

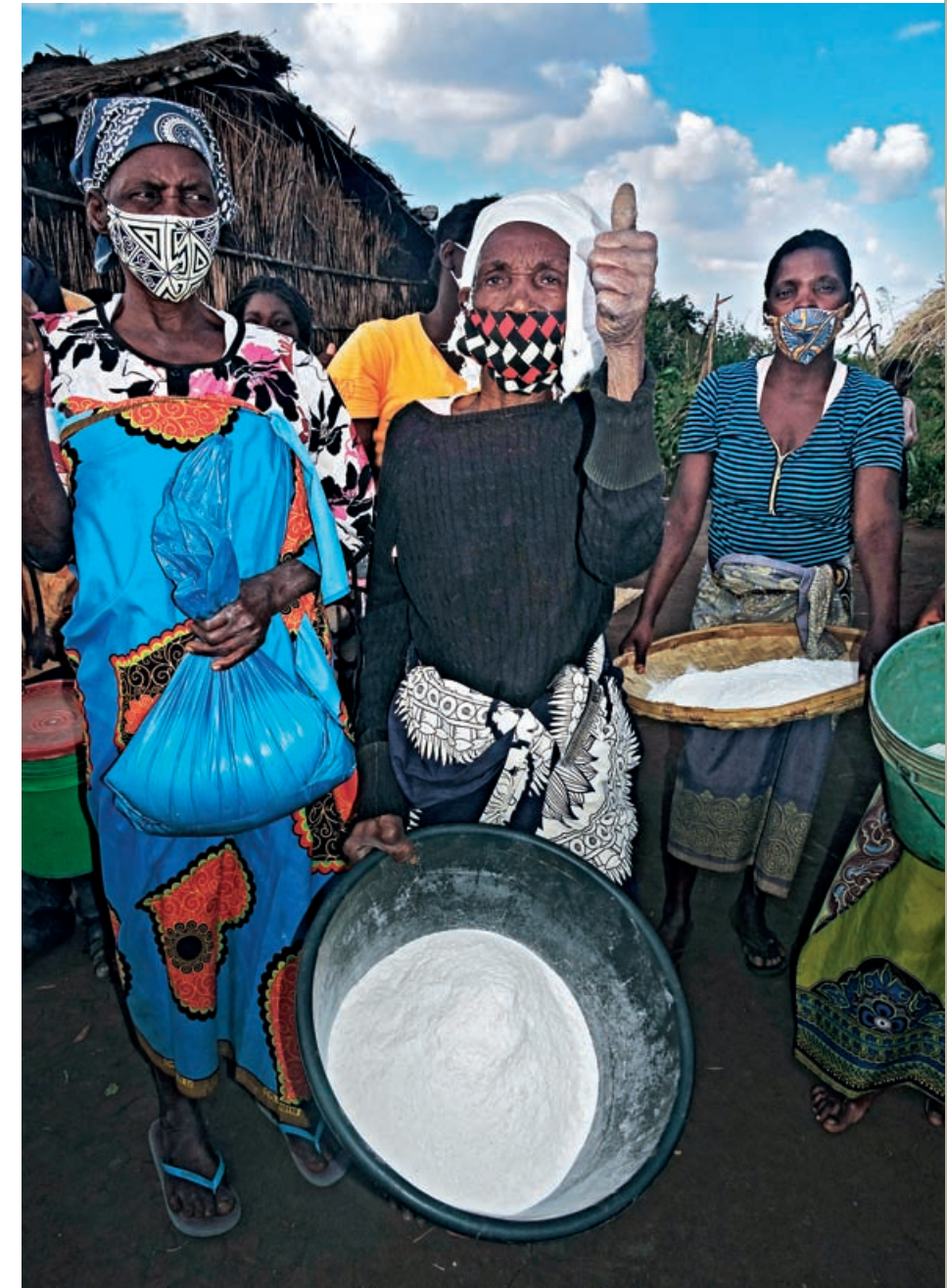
The villagers have taken such values to heart, understanding that they can help others despite being poor themselves. As a result, they cheerfully work on the farms, volunteering there a few days a month. They weed, fetch water to irrigate the vegetables, and do other work. Taking a few days a month to volunteer doesn't affect their livelihoods in any way, but the impact of their combined efforts is significant. Of the seven Great Love Farms, the three in Metuchira have been producing enough crops to be continually given away to help the needy. Over the past year, volunteers have made enough distributions to benefit more than 10,000 families.

There remains much for Tzu Chi to do in Mozambique, and the foundation is picking up the pace with which it is moving forward. Ground was broken in mid-August for a housing project postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic for survivors of Cyclone Idai. As part of that project, a housing village in Kura, Nhamatanda District, is scheduled to be completed in March 2022. Tzu Chi

Mozambique has sent three young people to Taiwan to take courses at Tzu Chi University and train at Tzu Chi headquarters. Two of the young people, having completed their courses and training, are returning to Mozambique in September. Once home, they will put their training and bilingual abilities in Portuguese and Chinese to good use by serving as a bridge between Tzu Chi headquarters and the Mozambique chapter and facilitating Tzu Chi work in the African country.

As for the development of Tzu Chi's farming project, Tsai pointed out that they will ask agricultural specialists to provide guidance in farming techniques and management, and that they might even establish fruit and vegetable wholesale markets in the future to help local farmers sell their produce. She said she has also been thinking about how to deal with the problem posed by the lack of irrigation facilities in Sofala Province. "Maybe we can learn from Tzu Chi Zimbabwe and drill wells for local communities?" she asked.

Though volunteers in Mozambique still have a long way to go, they have taken important and impressive first steps. Native volunteers have shown how, instead of relying on others for help, they can help themselves and reach out to help others too. Just as this saying goes: "Alone we go fast, together we go far." Everything is possible when everyone works together. Let's give the volunteers in Mozambique our best wishes as they work together to transform local lives and create lasting change. ❀



**Aid recipients donate some of the corn flour they received from Tzu Chi back to the foundation to help other needy people.**





# The First Thing They Want to Do When the Pandemic Ends

By Yeh Tzu-hao

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Photo courtesy of Tzu Chi Brazil

*Brazil has been one of the countries hit hardest by the pandemic, suffering some of the highest coronavirus rates and deaths over the past year. Tzu Chi volunteers there have done what they can to care for the needy throughout the dark days of the disease. They hope the pandemic can be reined in as soon as possible so they can restart their large-scale free clinic services.*

Early one July morning in 2021, volunteers took up their posts at several COVID vaccination centers at Tzu Chi Jing Si Halls in New Taipei City, northern Taiwan, and Kaohsiung, southern Taiwan, ready to guide and assist people coming to receive their shots. Taiwan was speeding up its inoculation campaign on the island, and Tzu Chi had joined to help in the effort.

At the same moment, local Tzu Chi volunteers were busy in Brazil's most populous city, São Paulo. They were 11 time-zones behind Taiwan, so night had just fallen there. The volunteers were busy distributing meals to street people in the city center.

From March to May 2021, the daily number of COVID cases recorded in Brazil had ranged from 30,000 to 100,000. Knowing that the pandemic must have put the homeless in an even tighter spot, volunteers started a meal distribution project for them in June. Five volunteers usually travel together in a car for such distributions, bringing with them enough food and other supplies for 70 people, then walk the side streets to deliver the food, still warm, into the hands of the homeless.

"It's no use distributing uncooked food to them," said Chen Sou-yong (陳守永), head of Tzu Chi Brazil, as he explained why he and his fellow volunteers do not distribute the typical food packages they usually give out to other needy people. "They can't cook on the street, so we cook for them at home, box the food up, and deliver it to them." The volunteers distribute the food at night because

street people are usually away at work during the day, and it is easier to find them at night.

Each portion of food the volunteers prepare is enough to feed 1.5 to two people. The boxed meals include bean paste, turmeric rice, noodles in tomato sauce, and potatoes. Such a meal is hearty enough to make a street person, who often goes hungry, feel full for a day. Volunteers are hoping that the extra calories and nutrition in the meals will strengthen the immune systems of the homeless and help them avoid becoming sick with COVID.

In addition to hot food, volunteers also distribute a special kind of "blanket" to help the homeless stay warm. Because they do not have fixed, permanent dwellings, they have to be prepared to move frequently with what belongings they have. Their stuff needs to be lightweight and portable. To accommodate this need, volunteers learned from the Internet how to make blankets for the homeless from Tetra Paks. Volunteers collect used Tetra Pak cartons, disassemble and wash them, then sew them into sheets large enough for a person to use. They sew ties onto the sheets too, so that the blankets can be easily rolled up, tied, and carried. This greatly decreases the chance that homeless persons will lose the sheets.

Even though such blankets aren't as durable as those made from regular textiles, they can provide protection from the rain and cold, so they are popular with the homeless.

Volunteers' weekly winter night distributions to the homeless have warmed the hearts of those

in need and buoyed the spirits of the volunteers themselves. As they prepare the hot meals and sew the Tetra Pak blankets, they experience the joy of helping others. "We are night angels," volunteer Ester Ferreira da Silva shared on a messaging app. "We have infinite love and courage."

## Caring for underserved children

Aside from the distributions to street people in São Paulo, volunteers in Brazil also visit towns near the city to distribute packages of food items to underprivileged students and their families. For example, they held such distributions in Itaquaquecetuba, Francisco Morato, and the more remote Caucaia do Alto in April and May. Among those participating volunteers were two elementary school principals who had joined Tzu Chi and the teachers they had enlisted to help in the events.

"All schools are closed due to the pandemic," volunteer Chen Sou-yong said, "but principal Nadir Godoi offered her school [Escola Estadual Vereador Durval Evaristo dos Santos] for Tzu Chi to use as a distribution venue in Itaquaquecetuba." Chen lauded the principal for her philanthropic spirit, explaining that she not only introduced Tzu Chi to teachers in her school but also led them to grow vegetables in vacant lots in the school, cook the vegetables, and make packed meals to distribute to needy families along with Tzu Chi's packages of food items.

Claudineia Aparecida Nunes Pereira, who serves at Escola Municipal de Campininha in Caucaia do Alto, is another loving principal who cares for the well-being of needy students. Just last year, she paid a visit to Dharma Master Cheng Yen in Taiwan. She resonated with the Master's teaching, "If suffering people cannot come to us, we must go to them." It was in that spirit that the principal helped arrange for Tzu Chi to distribute 70 food packages to underserved students on May 12 this year, the same day the educational department was distributing textbooks to students.

The school's deputy principal, Elaine Sandero, is another educator who exemplifies love through her actions. Volunteer Chen said of her: "She has led young volunteers to make boxed meals in their homes and then drive for two hours to the city center of São Paulo to take part in our distributions to street people."

Brazil has ranked as one of the countries with



**Tzu Chi volunteers in Brazil on their way to distribute boxed meals to street people in the city of São Paulo**

the most confirmed coronavirus infections and deaths. Local Tzu Chi volunteers have worked hard for the past year to strike a balance between implementing their charity work and maintaining the requirements to prevent transmitting the virus. For example, they once spent seven days distributing just 61 food packages—all because they needed to minimize the number of participants at each distribution site. Even though volunteers were taking all the necessary precautions, they had no choice but to suspend some major events. The risk was just too high. Volunteer Fang Li-zon (方麗蓉) said, "Prior to the pandemic, we'd always set out in a large convoy of more than ten vehicles when visiting rural areas to conduct our free clinics. The vehicles carried both people and medical equipment. But such large affairs are impossible now. It's just too risky to hold them at this time."

## Online medical services

The wife of a physician, Fang explained that the Tzu Chi Brazil office was established in 1992, nearly 30 years ago, and that volunteers began providing free medical services in rural areas just two or three years later. A wide gap exists between the rich and the poor in Brazil. Private hospitals are expensive, and public ones suffer from inadequate resources. As a result, it is hard for the poor to receive quality medical treatment. It's no surprise that the medical services offered by Tzu Chi became very popular among locals as soon as they were launched.

The medical events started out on a small scale, with one radiologist and three or four den-



tists seeing patients in small churches, but the scope of services has since been greatly expanded. Such events—before they were put on hold due to the pandemic—were often staffed by more than one hundred physicians and support volunteers and attended by over 500 patients. The Tzu Chi medical team provides treatment in internal medicine, gynecology, pediatrics, ophthalmology (including fitting patients with eyeglasses), dentistry, psychiatry, and traditional Chinese medicine. Over time, volunteers have had to borrow larger spaces to use as event venues due to the large number of medical workers, support volunteers, and patients at each event, plus the space required by ultrasonic machines and equipment for dentistry and ophthalmology. The aforementioned school principals who became Tzu Chi volunteers joined the foundation because they had lent their schools to Tzu Chi to serve as free clinic venues.

Since March 2020, however, volunteers have had to suspend such large-scale medical events because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Even though Tzu Chi Brazil has received frequent requests to resume the services, volunteers have had to regretfully decline. “People have been calling to ask when we are restarting our clinics,” said volunteer Lin Her-shing (林合鎡), who oversees Tzu Chi’s medical work in Brazil. “I always tell them we need to wait a while longer. The pandemic is still raging. It’d be really bad if our medical events resulted in cluster infections.”

Though the reason for suspending the clinics was valid, the services had been offered for more than two decades before they were forced to a sudden stop by the pandemic. The underserved had relied on them for a long time—what are they to do during the interim? “We started an online free clinic this April to allow people to continue accessing our services,” Fang Li-zon said. “We offer treatment in ophthalmology and psychiatry every week, and in internal medicine once every two weeks.”

Chen Sou-yong added: “Our doctors see patients via videoconferencing, then write prescriptions for them, which can be filled at a pharmacy. If a prescription involves antibiotics or other controlled medicines, we mail the medicines to the patient.”

In addition to their regular charity work, Tzu Chi Brazil has also donated personal protective equipment (PPE) to local healthcare institutions to



**Volunteers from Tzu Chi Brazil donated personal protective equipment to the municipal government of Cotia in the state of São Paulo on June 12, 2020.**

LIN JIN-MAN

help protect medical professionals from the coronavirus. With the help of physicians of the Tzu Chi International Medical Association, an inquiry was made at the end of March 2020 to several major hospitals in the state of São Paulo whether they needed help with PPE. The inquiry revealed that the hospitals were suffering from a severe shortage of face masks, gloves, safety goggles, and protective clothing. Among the hospitals included in the inquiry was Santa Casa de Misericórdia, founded over 400 years ago.

“Our connection with Santa Casa started a long time ago,” volunteer Chen Sou-yong said. “Our Paraguay branch once referred two patients afflicted with elephantiasis to us for help, and we sent them to Santa Casa for treatment. This time, when we were organizing the donations of PPE, we asked the hospital to help us take care of some import procedures.”

Thanks to the assistance of Santa Casa and Taiwan’s Overseas Community Affairs Council, the first batch of PPE provided by Tzu Chi headquarters in Hualien, Taiwan, was distributed to seven medical institutions, nursing homes, and government health agencies in Brazil in May 2021. Of the donated items, 90,000 face masks, 6,000 pairs of gloves, and 3,300 protective garments were supplied to Santa Casa, which, of all the hospitals in Brazil, had admitted the largest number of patients diagnosed with COVID-19. Santa Casa administrators thanked Tzu Chi for extending aid

to them all the way from Taiwan, saying that the protective gear would help safeguard their staff and enhance their sense of security, thus enabling them to put up a better fight against the daunting coronavirus.

Volunteers in Brazil have since done their best to meet the local need for PPE. The world has now lived with COVID for more than one and a half years, but none of the volunteers have yet dared let down their guard—they know what they are up against. But they are beginning to face the future with guarded optimism because of the roll-out of COVID vaccines.

Volunteer Lin Her-shing explained that most of the local COVID patients previously rushed to the ER or admitted into hospitals were over 60, and that they often died a few days after checking into a hospital. But the situation greatly improved after the government started vaccinating older people. Using the state of São Paulo as an example, he said that the mortality rate of older COVID patients decreased from 60 percent to 20 percent after the vaccination program was launched.

Having witnessed firsthand how the vaccines reduce COVID severity and the death rate, Lin has urged his friends and fellow volunteers in Taiwan to be sure to get their shots, and to take whatever vaccine is made available to them first.



**Volunteers delivered daily necessities to a community in Itapevi, São Paulo state, on January 31, 2021. The community had endured a double blow of hardship from the pandemic and a flood.**

CHEN SOU-YONG

## Properly protected

Looking back over the past year, both Chen Sou-yong and Fang Li-zon felt the frustration of trying to get people in Brazil to wear masks. And it isn’t just the general public—politicians do not take masking well either.

Lin Her-shing pointed out that when the pandemic situation was at its most serious in Brazil, all the major hospitals in São Paulo were jam-packed with seriously ill COVID patients—the wards, the emergency rooms, and even the hallways overflowed with patients. The government had no choice but to set up field hospitals for people with milder symptoms. “It wasn’t until someone around them was hospitalized that they realized the severity of the situation,” Lin said of the general Brazilians’ reaction to COVID.

Lin said that at the time his relatives in Taiwan were very worried about him and his family and urged them to return to Taiwan. But considering the risks they might face if they should take the trip, they eventually decided to stay. Even so, they were full of anxiety about the uncertain future, not knowing how the pandemic was going to develop. “My wife often suffered from insomnia as a result and complained about all kinds of aches and pains,” said Lin. “She eventually had to consult a psychiatrist. But things have greatly improved since then, as we know better now how to protect ourselves against the coronavirus and as vaccines have become available to us.” Despite his optimistic tone, he said that this past year has really left a mark on them and created unforgettable memories for all the Tzu Chi volunteers in the country.

With a population of 210 million, Brazil has recorded more than 500,000 deaths from the coronavirus, second only to the United States. On the bright side, more than 145 million doses of COVID vaccines have been administered in the nation, and the rate of vaccination is still increasing. The growing vaccination coverage is helping to fight the pandemic more than anything. Lin sincerely hopes that the increasing inoculation rate can lower the number of COVID cases to such an extent that schools can reopen. When the pandemic is successfully curbed, the first thing he and his fellow volunteers want to do is restart the large-scale free clinics, bringing much needed medical care to the underserved in Brazil.

Such clinics, Tzu Chi’s hallmark of “love-in-action,” will herald a new dawn after the long, dark night of the pandemic. ☸





# Aid for a Second Wave

By Huang Xiao-qian

Translated by Tang Yau-yang  
Photos by Arimami Suryo Asmoro

*The pandemic peaked in Indonesia in July 2021, but the first half of August was still seeing a daily average of 20,000 to 30,000 new infections. Tzu Chi Indonesia has since February 2021 been offering inoculation services to help accelerate the country's vaccination drive, and a pandemic center was opened on June 14, 2021, to assist in the treatment and isolation of infected patients. Five thousand oxygen concentrators and rice for seven million households are also being distributed to help people through the crisis.*

People in Indonesia returned home in droves in mid-May 2021 to celebrate the Muslim feast day of Eid al-Fitr, which marks the end of the holy month of Ramadan. That set the stage for the Delta coronavirus variant to quicken its spread, ushering in the second wave of the pandemic in the country. The number of daily diagnosed infections kept hitting new highs throughout June, and eventually topped 50,000 in a single day, on July 14, the highest number since the outbreak. Though the daily infection rate dropped slightly after that high, there were still 20,000 to

30,000 new infections every day through the first half of August.

The Indonesian government stepped up its efforts to vaccinate people amidst the new COVID surge. They also imposed the Emergency Public Activity Restriction (PPKM Darurat) in Java and Bali in early July. All people were asked to work from home or attend online classes. Restaurants were prohibited from serving sit-down customers, and only industries deemed essential were allowed to operate normally.

The government wasn't the only organization to respond to the worsening pandemic in the country. Adding to the fight against the pandemic was Tzu Chi Indonesia. They had almost completed a new Tzu Chi medical facility—Indonesia Tzu Chi Hospital—so they strategically converted the 9th floor of the rear building into a pandemic control center. It opened on June 14 with 56 patient beds, a special operating room for COVID-19, an intensive care unit, and high-tech equipment, including that for computerized tomography.

Unfortunately, the patient beds there were occupied as soon as the center opened. Huang

**A plane chartered by Tzu Chi Indonesia flew to Guangzhou, China, on July 24 to transport much needed medical equipment and supplies back to Indonesia, which was suffering from a shortage of such items during a second serious outbreak of COVID-19.**

COURTESY OF HUALIEN TZU CHI HEADQUARTERS



Li-chun (黃禮春), the executive general manager of the hospital, said, "Many patients insisted on being admitted simply because they were too scared, but their symptoms were not really serious. In this regard, we need to educate the public so that our patient beds are reserved for people who really need them."

Given that the beds filled up so quickly, doctors could only prescribe drugs for those who were mildly sick and suggested that they go into self-isolation; for patients with moderate or severe symptoms, doctors either treated them or referred them to other hospitals.

## The twins

The first patient admitted into the pandemic center was Mita Indah Sari, an expectant mother. Mita and her husband, Tomy, were married in 2017. A little more than three years after they tied the knot, they received the good news that Mita was pregnant. A friend recommended that she seek prenatal care at Tzu Chi Great Love Hospital, located in a housing village built by the foundation in Cengkareng, a district in West Jakarta. It was there that Dr. Andry Hondir discovered that Mita was pregnant with twins. Mita was sur-

**A hundred oxygen concentrators donated by Tzu Chi arrived at an air force base in Medan, North Sumatra, Indonesia, for delivery to public hospitals.**

ZHOU YU-FA

prised but thrilled.

As she entered the seventh month of pregnancy in early June, Mita began to experience headaches and nausea. She used her national health insurance to visit a community health center and learned that her systolic blood pressure was as high as 200 mmHg. She went back to Dr. Hondir for a further examination and was diagnosed with preeclampsia, formerly known as toxemia. If not treated in time, the condition could lead to serious—even fatal—complications for both the mother and the fetuses. The best course of action would be an early delivery. Although Mita was expecting twins and wasn't full-term yet, the medical team recommended a Caesarean section.

Unexpectedly, Mita tested positive for COVID-19 before the surgery. The Great Love hospital did not have a dedicated operating room for patients with COVID-19, so the medical team there suggested that she go to another hospital. The couple



checked with many hospitals, but none had a bed for her. Fortunately, the pandemic center at Indonesia Tzu Chi Hospital had just opened on June 14. With Dr. Hondir's referral, Mita became the first patient there.

The next day, June 15, at nine o'clock in the evening, two pediatricians, an obstetrician, and an anesthesiologist performed a Caesarean section on Mita and delivered a pair of cute boys, bringing a dose of happy news during the heightened state of pandemic stress.

Tomy had been laid off three months prior to the birth of the boys. To help the couple, Tzu Chi paid Mita's medical bill in full. "Thanks to the doctors at the Great Love hospital and Indonesia Tzu Chi Hospital," the new father said. "Thanks also to the Tzu Chi Foundation. This is a miracle from heaven."

In addition to establishing the pandemic center to help in the fight against the novel coronavirus, Tzu Chi offered a vacant building at the Great Love hospital—slated to be used as a dormitory for the hospital's nursing staff—to temporarily serve as an isolation facility for COVID patients with mild symptoms. The second, third, and fourth floors can accommodate up to 63 people. The fifth floor is reserved for Tzu Chi employees diagnosed with the infection.

Dr. Adrianus Kanasis, leader of an anti-COVID team at the Great Love hospital, said that the hospital had also set up a negative pressure ward, providing

ten beds for adults and two beds for children. The emergency room offered an additional 11 beds dedicated to the care of COVID patients.

### Tough it out

In order to curb the pandemic as quickly as possible, the Indonesian government implemented a large-scale vaccination plan, and even set their goal at a million vaccinations per day. Tzu Chi Indonesia began offering vaccination services as early as February to help increase the country's inoculation rate. Three locations started participating in this service at different times, including the Jing Si Hall in Jakarta, a department store across from the Jing Si Hall, and the Tzu Chi Great Love School in the housing village in Cengkareng. A goal was set for each location to complete a thousand vaccinations a day.

To help the public feel comfortable and at ease when they go to receive their shots, the chairs on-site are spaced one meter (39.4 inches) apart. After participants have shown their ID cards and filled out declaration forms, the medical staff takes their blood pressure and temperature and asks about their health conditions—steps necessary to help assess if they are fit for the vaccination.

**A 43-year-old taxi driver who worried about getting infected at work receives a COVID shot at Tzu Chi Great Love School in Cengkareng.**



**The pandemic center at Indonesia Tzu Chi Hospital opened on June 14, 2021. Its first patient was an expectant mother who had been diagnosed with COVID-19 (above, middle). She gave birth to a pair of twin boys (left) on the 15th.**

LEFT PHOTO COURTESY OF INDONESIA TZU CHI HOSPITAL

Medical workers from Tzu Chi Great Love Hospital help staff the vaccination site at the Tzu Chi school, where people wait in line in a corridor before entering a classroom in groups of five to receive their shots. The limit on the number of people entering the classroom at a time is to prevent overcrowding in the room. Six healthcare professionals from the hospital and 18 volunteers work together per day to pull off a vaccination session.

The Indonesian government successfully raised the vaccine coverage rate in Jakarta to 90 percent by August 17, the nation's independence day. Tzu Chi Indonesia is also working to finish inoculating 300,000 people by the end of September. In addition to Jakarta, Tzu Chi offices in other areas in the nation, in support of the government, also provide vaccination services for the public. As of the end of July, 12 Tzu Chi locations had served as vaccina-

tion stations, inoculating over 114,600 people.

Lena, a waitress at a restaurant, said of the vaccine shot that she had just received at a Tzu Chi location: "Because we come into contact with a lot of people at work, our restaurant requires all employees to be vaccinated to protect ourselves and others." Fendi, another vaccine recipient, said, "Thank you, Allah. I feel safer now after getting my shot. I can now breathe easier at work."

Since the pandemic started in early March 2020, the Tzu Chi Indonesia branch has worked three times with businesspeople in the country to raise donations to help the poor through the pandemic. In July 2021, volunteers started distributing 35,000 tons of rice to seven million households. The branch is also distributing 5,000 oxygen concentrators to public hospitals in hopes of effectively reducing the local COVID mortality rate and helping patients survive the pandemic.



# A Test

By Wang Tuan-cheng

Abridged and translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Photo by Hsiao Yiu-hwa

In a competitive society, everyone wants an edge that makes them stand out and increases their chance at success. However, if you become too attached to your edge or advantage, it could become a disadvantage. An advantage becomes a disadvantage when it alters your perspective and prevents you from thinking outside the box and seeing the big picture.

I once heard a story that illustrates this idea:

An illustrious company ran an ad offering high wages to attract talent to work for them. Over a thousand people applied. Of those, a hundred candidates were selected for further screening.

The owner of the company personally created the test to determine the best candidate for his enterprise. The test paper contained but one scenario: "It was a stormy night. As powerful wind and rain drove down the temperature, one store after another closed before their usual time. The streets were deserted, save for three people waiting anxiously under a dim streetlight at a bus stop for a bus to come. Though the bus was nowhere in sight, you happened to be driving by and saw the three waiting people. When you looked closer, you saw that one of them was an old man, looking very ill and needing to be rushed to the hospital. The second person was a physician who had once saved your life. You had been looking for a good opportunity to repay your debt of gratitude to him. The third and last person was none other than your beloved girlfriend. They all urgently needed your help, but your car only had room for one person. Which one would you take?"

The scenario and question might be an aptitude test or a way to find out the applicants' ability to think on their feet or handle a crisis. Whatever it was, applicants needed to provide an answer that could satisfactorily resolve the dilemma.

After pondering for a while, the candidates began putting down their answers.

Some wrote that they would take the sick old man. His life was in danger. Nothing is more precious than life, and he could die if not brought to a hospital, so the choice was obvious. Though that decision would surely disappoint their girlfriend or the physician that had saved their life, they could explain to them later.

Some said that they would take the physician. They argued that this was a perfect opportunity for them to thank him for saving their lives. People who didn't know how to be grateful were no different from beasts. As for the old man, his days were obviously numbered. Even if he was saved now, he likely wouldn't live much longer. Besides, he was a total stranger. They wouldn't feel too guilty not saving him. And they reasoned that if their girlfriend didn't forgive them for choosing the physician over her, they could only let her go. They would meet other girls.

Some chose to take their beloved girlfriend. After all, this was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to win the girl's heart. If they missed it, they might never encounter such a great opportunity again. They could look for another opportunity to pay back their doctor, and as for the old man, they decided that others would save him.

Some examinees wrote that they would drive straight past without stopping to take any one of the three. They reasoned that if their car could take only one person, it was beyond them to solve the problem. Since there were bound to be two people disappointed regardless of the decision, why put themselves in that position? Besides, the bus might come any second. Even if it didn't, other cars would come along. Surely someone else would stop to help.

Other answers appeared on the test sheets, each reflecting an examinee's values and attitude towards life. But of all the applicants, the owner of the company singled one out as superior and hired him. That applicant had answered like this: "I'd hand my car keys over to the physician to show my gratitude for saving my life. I'd ask him to take the sick old man to the hospital, while I'd stay and wait with my girlfriend for the bus to come. She would need my support and company and this would be a great opportunity to show my love for her. When the bus comes, I'd board the bus with her and accompany her home."

Just like that, the applicant provided a great way out of the dilemma and won his way into the well-established company.

The applicant was able to give a satisfactory answer because he had managed to get around the blind spots and think differently. The other applicants had been too attached to their own viewpoints—that they had to stay behind the steering wheel—to think outside the proverbial box. The box limited what they could see of the problem and prevented them from working out a good solution.

The one who passed the test did it by willingly relinquishing his car keys and his control of the car. He let go of a definite advantage, especially on a dark and stormy night. But not being limited by his advantage resolved the ethical dilemma in the scenario. Letting the car go actually worked to everyone's benefit in the end—the original problem was resolved and everyone received what they needed.

This story illustrates how letting go is actually the best way to receive. Letting go of something leaves your hands open to receive something new, something better. If you hold on too tightly to what you have, like the examinees holding on to their car keys, you might miss out on something better.

In life, we often need to make choices. Every major decision you make tests your wisdom. Attachment to your perspectives is the biggest enemy of wisdom. Opening up your mind, breaking away from fixed perspectives, and renouncing your attachments will reward you with unencumbered thinking, help you see the big picture, and lead you to make the best decision for yourself. ❁







# Let Sincerity and Love Lead the Way

## The Tzu Chi Path of Liu Su-mei, CEO of Tzu Chi Indonesia

**Compiled by Huang Xiao-qian**

Edited and translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Photos courtesy of Tzu Chi Indonesia

*In 1992, Liu Su-mei (劉素美) and her family emigrated from Taiwan to Indonesia, where her husband was setting up a factory. She met a group of Taiwanese businessmen's wives there, and together they started volunteering for Tzu Chi. The first Tzu Chi office in Indonesia was located in Liu's home. From that humble beginning, Tzu Chi Indonesia has since expanded across the country, with chapters in 18 cities. Their work encompasses the four Tzu Chi missions of charity, medicine, education, and culture. In this article, Liu—now the CEO of Tzu Chi Indonesia—reflects on her Tzu Chi Path during a question-and-answer session with senior volunteer Jia Wen-yu (賈文玉).*

**Many of the Tzu Chi volunteers in Indonesia know you are busy every day, that you are very hard-working, walk fast, and are constantly in meetings. But we don't know you very well, even though we all live in the same country. Could you share with us first how you came to join Tzu Chi?**

I was born into a middle-class family in Taiwan to parents who didn't mind hard work and who lived frugally. Being fond of giving and doing good, they taught us as we grew up to help others and do good deeds, no matter how small.

After I had moved to Indonesia with my husband and children, Sister Liang Qiong (梁瓊) introduced Tzu Chi to me. She was also from Taiwan. I met her at the school my children were attending in Jakarta. That was back in the 1990s, and I knew many Indonesians were struggling to get by, so that's when I started donating money to help local people in need.

At the time, many Taiwanese wives would, like me, accompany their children to the school.

After they had dropped their kids off, they'd wait around until it was time to take their children home. Since they didn't have anywhere to go in the meantime, and my home was near the school, I'd invite them to my home to rest. Gradually more and more people began showing up. It was during this time that Liang began taking us to visit nursing homes and orphanages. We also packed items to be given to the needy at my home. That's how the very first Tzu Chi office in Indonesia came to be located in my home.

### **How did Tzu Chi Indonesia start?**

Tzu Chi Indonesia started by helping needy households. Liang was our leader until she moved back to Taiwan with her family. Since the Tzu Chi office was located in my home by that time, everyone hoped that I could take her position. So, that's what I did.

Even though we were volunteering for Tzu Chi, our knowledge of the foundation was very limited—all we knew was that its founder was in





**Liu Su-mei (third from right) and five other wives of Taiwanese businessmen in Indonesia visited Master Cheng Yen at the Jing Si Abode in Hualien, eastern Taiwan, in 1993. That was the first time Liu met the Master, who would become her mentor for life.**

COURTESY OF LIU SU-MEI

Hualien, Taiwan. I thought that since we had decided to do philanthropic work in Indonesia under the banner of Tzu Chi, we should get a better understanding of the foundation. So, in 1993, five other Taiwanese women and I visited Tzu Chi headquarters—the Jing Si Abode—in Hualien.

We were really naïve and innocent back then. We didn't even know that we should have made an appointment first, and just showed up! It had occurred to us to dress properly, so we had bought identical white blouses and identical pairs of blue pants and wore them, but as it turned out, the colors of our clothes were the exact opposite of those of the blue-shirt-and-white-pants uniforms worn by Tzu Chi volunteers. When we arrived at the Abode, a nun there asked us where we were from. We told her we were from Indonesia and that the purpose of our visit was to learn how to carry out Tzu Chi work in the country. Even though we had shown up unannounced, we were received very graciously.

When we went back to Indonesia, we continued our work of helping the needy. When we learned of people having difficulty getting by, we assessed their needs and provided financial aid. When someone was sick and couldn't afford the medical bill, we'd help them out too. The language barrier was still a problem for us at the time, but we overcame it by asking people to interpret for us. When we needed guidance, we'd phone the Jing Si Abode for help.

Gradually, we gained a better understanding of Tzu Chi's guiding principles for giving aid. We also came to better realize what Master Cheng Yen meant when she taught us to learn and grow

through the work we do. I had joined Tzu Chi because I wanted to do charity work, but imperceptibly an inner transformation began taking place in me. I became more grateful for everything, and learned to give without expecting anything in return. Though I didn't plan it, Master Cheng Yen was my very first Buddhist master and would become my mentor for life.

**Mount Merapi in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, erupted at the end of November 1994. It led to the first large-scale relief operation Tzu Chi volunteers in Indonesia organized. Could you relate how you went about the work at that time?**

More than 5,000 people were evacuated that time. Our group of Taiwanese wives, disregarding the language barrier and any possible danger, decided to do something to help. We succeeded in getting a lot of people to donate relief goods. We were concerned the goods would be stolen as they were being delivered to Yogyakarta, so we used a 40-foot cargo container to transport the items. We estimated the arrival time of the container in Yogyakarta and then flew over there in advance to wait for it.

When we arrived, however, we couldn't find the cargo container. It turned out that the mountain roads there were too narrow to accommodate the delivery vehicle. There were no cell phones back then, so we had to hit the roads to physically look for the container. We looked all over. Following some fallen tree branches along a road, we eventually found the container. We then got a truck to transport the relief goods to the disaster area.

We also visited hospitalized survivors at the time to distribute consolation cash. We saw during such visits how people who had been burned by the lava or fumes wailed with pain. That was the first time in our lives we realized what a "living hell" meant.

I made seven more visits to the disaster area after that and learned in the process that local residents were being relocated to safer regions where they would need new houses. We helped meet the need by raising enough money to build 12 houses. We gave the money we had raised to the social welfare department in Yogyakarta in 1995. That marked the first time Tzu Chi donated money to build houses for the needy in Indonesia.

**Soon afterwards, you began providing free clinics for the needy. What led you to carry out medical work in Indonesia?**

Back then, many children in impoverished rural areas suffered from malnutrition. Tuberculosis was common among local populations too. These children and patients needed long-term medical aid and nutritional support. In 1995, Tzu Chi launched a project to help address these issues, in cooperation with the health bureaus in Tangerang and Serang, both in the province of Banten. Three villages were included in our project. We held monthly free clinics, providing medicine, powdered milk, and rice. Our efforts eventually enabled 88 percent of patients included in our project to recover.

In 1998, social and ethnic violence among Indonesians and Chinese erupted in Indonesia, seriously impacting the economy. We distributed

more than 100,000 packages of rice and other items in the aftermath to help the poor. The following year, we conducted a large-scale free clinic—our first large-scale free clinic in Indonesia. We provided treatments in surgery, dentistry, ophthalmology, and internal medicine, serving 9,523 patients in three days. Among these, 604 people had surgery.

We didn't have any experience in holding such a large medical event at the time, and we lacked the needed medical equipment. If it weren't for the help of healthcare professionals in Indonesia and members of the Tzu Chi International Medical Association (TIMA) from Taiwan, the Philippines, and Singapore, we couldn't have pulled off such a large event. Tzu Chi medical volunteers from outside Indonesia helped in that free clinic, and continued to visit for large-scale free clinics after that. They eventually inspired health workers in Indonesia to form a local TIMA chapter.

In 2003, we established a free clinic center in a Tzu Chi housing village in Cengkareng, West Jakarta. The free clinic center was later upgraded to a hospital, becoming what is now Tzu Chi Great Love Hospital. Our newest hospital, Indonesia Tzu Chi Hospital, has started a trial operation this year too.

**The turning point for Tzu Chi Indonesia came when two deputy CEOs joined. Could you share about this?**

Brother Franky Oesman Widjaja (黃榮年) joined in 1998, and Brother Sugianto Kusuma (郭再源) followed in 2002. Their joining meant a lot for the development of Tzu Chi Indonesia and



**Liu Su-mei has volunteered for Tzu Chi in Indonesia for 28 years. This picture was taken in 2003 when a housing village the foundation built for people who had previously lived in illegally built houses on the banks of the Angke River was first inaugurated. In the background of the picture is the newly completed village, located in Cengkareng, West Jakarta.**

YAN LIN-ZHAO





**Tzu Chi Indonesia distributed more than 446,000 packages of daily necessities to families impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. The branch worked twice more with local businesspeople in January and July this year to raise donations to help the underserved. After receiving ten kilograms (22 pounds) of rice and 20 face masks from Tzu Chi, an older woman said, “Thank you, Allah. Thank you, Tzu Chi volunteers. We don’t have much rice left at home.”**

was the reason why we could make such a big difference in the country. We have Mr. Eka Tjipta Widjaja (黃奔聰), the founder of the Sinar Mas Group in Indonesia, and you, sister Wen-yu, to thank for their joining. [Sister Wen-yu introduced Eka Tjipta Widjaja to Tzu Chi.]

Mr. Widjaja was the father of Brother Franky, who became Master Cheng Yen’s lay disciple on May 9, 1998, when he accompanied his father on a visit to the Master in Taiwan. In the aftermath of the May 1998 riots in Indonesia that I mentioned before, Mr. Widjaja instructed Brother Franky to lead their employees at the Sinar Mas Group to help Tzu Chi distribute 100,000 packages of daily necessities to the needy. Tzu Chi Indonesia wasn’t as big at the time, and we couldn’t have accomplished that massive mission without their support.

Brother Franky had just become the Master’s disciple at the time, but he stepped up to the plate and did his very best. I’ve since learned so much from him. He has a broad, pure mind, and is very humble and approachable. He exemplifies qualities of a great leader. He often says, “If there is work no one wants to do, I’ll do it. And I’ll always fully support those who step up to the plate.”

Back in the day when Tzu Chi Indonesia was quickly growing and needed manpower, Brother Franky came in with a lot of support, including letting his high-ranking employees at the Sinar Mas Group go so that they could join and work for Tzu Chi. It might be easy for big-time business owners to donate money, but it is another matter when it comes to parting with their important executives. This just goes to show how much Brother Franky loves the Master and Tzu Chi.

That brings me to Brother Sugianto, whom we nicknamed “Brother No Problem.” He has a strong sense of fairness and justice and is as good as his word. He is also decisive and efficient.

At the request of Mr. Widjaja, Brother Sugianto joined Brother Franky and me in carrying out relief work for Tzu Chi after Jakarta was hit by severe flooding in 2002. As soon as he joined Tzu Chi, he began introducing entrepreneurs to the foundation. Aided by donations from the business sector, we built two housing villages for flood victims who had previously lived in illegally built houses along the banks of the Angke River. We built three more housing villages for people made homeless by the catastrophic 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. From 2003 to 2005, working with Chinese businesspeople, we distributed rice to 2.5 million needy households. During that period, we also

inaugurated one branch office after another across Indonesia, 15 in all. In 2005, our TV station, DAAI TV Indonesia, began operation. In 2008, we started a project to build a Tzu Chi complex in Jakarta to accommodate facilities for our four missions: a Jing Si Hall, an international school, and the soon to be inaugurated Tzu Chi Hospital. Through the work we have done in Indonesia, we have contributed to harmony among people of different races and religious faiths in our society. We have allowed Buddhism to win a lot of respect and affirmation in Indonesia.

I’m immensely grateful to Brothers Franky and Sugianto for using their business connections to encourage philanthropy among their fellow businesspeople. They’ve had a positive impact on society. The two are like real brothers related by blood. They respect and trust each other; they accommodate and complement each other. They revere Master Cheng Yen, have implicit faith in her, and live out her teachings. Many entrepreneurs in Indonesia have learned from their example, following in their footsteps to join Tzu Chi.

#### **Could you share your thoughts about carrying out the four Tzu Chi missions in Indonesia?**

Tzu Chi, founded by the Master, has four missions: charity, medicine, education, and culture. Breaking ground in 2008 for the Tzu Chi complex in Jakarta signified a milestone in our efforts to advance our four missions in Indonesia. The complex became home for a Jing Si Hall, DAAI TV Indonesia, an international school, and a hospital to help safeguard life.

Many volunteers in Indonesia, myself included, are not professionals in the work we do. Challenges along the way have been inevitable. But as we strove to overcome the challenges, we came to realize more deeply the hardships the Master must have experienced as she worked to build Tzu Chi from scratch. No matter the obstacles she faced, she steadfastly stuck to her path. We have taken courage from her indomitable spirit.

Charity work is the root of all Tzu Chi missions. We started by doing charity work too, with which we laid a firm foundation for Tzu Chi Indonesia. We have become what we are today by inspiring many people to join us. I’m thankful for the mindfulness and hard work of all our volunteers. Without them, we couldn’t have successfully built up our four missions. I’m also full of gratitude for the good karmic affinities that led a group





of entrepreneurs to join us. They are all devoted disciples of Master Cheng Yen. They have contributed their respective specialties to Tzu Chi, have given of themselves selflessly, and mindfully led others in working for Tzu Chi. They respect the professionals who work with them, and follow the Master's guidance. It's the concerted efforts of everyone that have made our four missions what they are today.

**You have been with Tzu Chi for 28 years. Could you talk about your fondest memories of the Master?**

It's a good thing I joined Tzu Chi relatively early. The Master had more time for us back in the early years. I could always ask her questions directly when I visited the Abode. I remember asking her one time: "Every Buddhist monastery, convent, or spiritual practice center is presided over by a monk or nun. Could you let a nun from

**The Jing Si Hall where Tzu Chi Indonesia is located was inaugurated in October 2012. CEO Liu Su-mei (middle) and deputy CEOs Franky Oesman Widjaja (right) and Sugianto Kusuma went onstage to express their gratitude for everyone who had contributed to Tzu Chi.**

ZHUANG HUI-ZHEN

the Abode come to Indonesia to lead us?" The Master responded: "Don't be attached to the formality of things. The most important thing in volunteering for Tzu Chi is to sincerely give of yourself. Let sincerity and love lead the way. With sincerity and love, you will be able to get many people to join you in serving the needy."

Another time, the Master said that she had founded Tzu Chi following the instructions her mentor Dharma Master Yin Shun gave her when she took refuge with him: "Work for Buddhism and for all living beings." Throughout her life, she

has done as her mentor instructed her. As she worked along the way, she's practiced patient endurance, and has never disputed with others over things.

The Master explained that whether it was helping the needy, building hospitals, or carrying out international relief work, disapproval or misunderstandings from others were inevitable. But she has never argued with the naysayers or defended herself when faced with criticism or untrue news reports. She just lets the truth speak for itself.

While the Master never contends or disputes with others, she is in a constant race against time. She strives to not let even a single second slip by in vain. She often says, "Time is running out." The transience of life and the fleeting nature of time pushes her to make the best of her time to give. So, even though she is often unwell, she still gives talks to us as often as she can to help us grow in wisdom. She worries we might stop moving forward on the Bodhisattva Path. I feel bad that instead of easing her burden we are making her worry about us.

On the fourth day of the Chinese New Year holiday this year, Tzu Chi volunteers in Indonesia wished the Master a happy Chinese New Year via videoconferencing. At the time, she reminded us to take good care of ourselves—she said that without good health we couldn't continue to carry out our volunteer work. Even though she is in ill health herself, she is still so concerned about us.

**You were named one of the "Top 10 Most Outstanding People" in Indonesia by Infobank and The Asian Post in 2020. What do you think about being the first foreigner to win such a recognition?**

I won the award because of Tzu Chi. The credit should go to the Master and the entire Tzu Chi family in Indonesia. Without Tzu Chi, without the Master's teachings, without all the volunteers who have worked with me over the past 28 years, I couldn't have been able to contribute what I have to Indonesian society.

**What expectations do you have for Tzu Chi Indonesia?**

Tzu Chi Indonesia has been growing very fast. In response, we must continue to recruit volunteers. Volunteers will carry the work of Tzu Chi into the future. We must also enlist more donating members. Doing so will tap into the love in people's hearts and pool it to do more good. I hope our ranks of volunteers will keep growing and that all volunteers, following in the Master's footsteps, will continue to work in unity and give selflessly. ❀

**Indonesia Tzu Chi Hospital (right), located next to the Jing Si Hall (left) in the Tzu Chi complex in Jakarta, has opened for a trial operation this year, signifying a big step forward for Tzu Chi Indonesia's medical mission.**





# The Illustrated JING SI APHORISMS

**The Buddha says:**  
Although I have achieved the ultimate wisdom, I still cannot help those who are not ready for my help.



Even when the Buddha was in this world, there were three things he could not do: he couldn't change anyone's karma, he couldn't help those who were not ready for his help, and he couldn't save all living beings.

If you can't change others, then just take care of yourself.



**Master Cheng Yen, let me take a picture of you so I can see you every single day!**  
What is the purpose of looking at me day after day? The important thing is to learn what I teach!

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



**USA**  
A wildfire known as the Dixie Fire started in Northern California on July 13, 2021. By late August, the fire had been 48 percent contained and had burned 759,218 acres across Butte, Plumas, and Shasta counties. More than a thousand structures were reported to have been destroyed in the conflagration.

**Tzu Chi volunteers from Northern California distributed gas gift cards and blankets to victims of the Dixie Fire on August 15, benefiting 122 families.**

GRACE CHEN

After conducting an on-site disaster assessment on August 11, Tzu Chi volunteers from Northern California decided to join other charities in providing aid to survivors. On August 15, 14 volunteers from San Jose, Sacramento, and Chico took part in a drive-through distribution event held in the parking lot of a Les Schwab Tire Center in Quincy, Plumas County. The volunteers broke into two-person teams, each team taking care of different duties. They greeted people who had come to the event, helped them fill out simple forms, confirmed that

the information was clear and correct, and then handed out gas gift cards and Tzu Chi's signature blankets, made from recycled PET bottles.

Danny Manning was one of the survivors who showed up at the venue to collect supplies for his family. He expressed his appreciation to Tzu Chi and the other organizations for making the distribution event possible. "We have almost nothing now," he said, "so I'm very thankful to Tzu Chi and the other groups for providing us with the supplies we need. Thank you so much!" All told, 122 families received gas gift cards and blankets from Tzu Chi on this day.





**A volunteer explains to a victim of the Dixie Fire how to use the gas gift card provided by Tzu Chi in a drive-through distribution.**

GRACE CHEN

On their visit to Quincy that day for the distribution, volunteers saw posters put up by fire victims thanking the firefighters for working tirelessly to bring the fire under control. Even though they had lost their homes to the fire, they didn't forget to thank those who had helped them. The messages warmed and lifted everyone's hearts.

## USA

July 17, 2021, was a beautiful day in Chicago. Early in the morning, Tzu Chi volunteers set up

**Volunteer Qiu Hui-shan displays the gifts to be given to the winners of a scholarship during a scholarship award ceremony held at the Tzu Chi Chicago office on July 17, 2021.**

CHEN PEI



some canopies at the Tzu Chi Chicago office for an outdoor scholarship award ceremony. Volunteers also neatly lined up the scholarships, award certificates, and gifts to be presented to the scholarship winners on some tables.

Tzu Chi Chicago's scholarship award ceremony last year was held online due to the pandemic. This year, the coronavirus situation had much improved—Illinois and Chicago had fully reopened in June, with nearly all COVID restrictions lifted. As a result, volunteers decided to conduct a physical award ceremony outdoors. Even though it was an outdoor ceremony, masks were mandated for every attendee.

Tzu Chi Chicago received 19 scholarship applications this year. Among those, 11 were reviewed by volunteers with the branch office, the other eight by other branch offices. After online interviews with the 11 candidates, an evaluation team for the scholarship program selected nine recipients.

The highlight of the ceremony was when each of the scholarship winners went onstage amidst applause to receive their scholarships and gifts and say a few words. For these students, the scholarships awarded by Tzu Chi had more than monetary significance—even more important was the encouragement and care they embodied. In addition to thanking Tzu Chi, recipient Chen Yu-rou (陳羽柔) said during her short speech that as an Asian growing up in the United States, she often had a feeling of not belonging. But whenever she participated in Tzu Chi activities or visited Tzu Chi, that feeling would disappear. For her, Tzu Chi meant unconditional love and a sense of home.

In addition to a scholarship of 1,500 U.S. dollars, each winner also received a gift pack from Tzu Chi. The gift pack contained several items, including a coin bank, a box of face masks, and a copy of *Jing Si Aphorisms* (a book of wise sayings by Dharma Master Cheng Yen).

Volunteer Qiu Hui-shan (丘蕙珊) was the emcee of the award ceremony. When she was displaying the items in the gift pack during the ceremony, she especially explained to the recipients why there was a coin bank among the gifts: "I believe you all know that our scholarships are only possible because of the kind-hearted generosity of donors around the world. The purpose of this coin bank is not for you to give back [by dropping your spare change into it every day to help the needy]. Instead, by giving you the bank, we are encouraging you to give rise to a kind thought every day and wish your family and people around the world the best."

After more than a year of remote learning, these young scholarship winners will return to their schools this autumn. Tzu Chi volunteers believed that while carrying on with their studies, these young people will remember the kind intentions behind the scholarships and pay their love forward.

## Germany

Heavy rainfalls caused widespread flooding across western Europe in July 2021. Germany was hit the hardest. Entire towns there were inundated by water. In early August, ten Tzu Chi volunteers from Germany and Austria met in Cologne, western Germany, before proceeding to the disaster areas to assess damage and evaluate what aid Tzu Chi could offer. One of the areas they visited was Bad Münstereifel, a historic spa town in the district of Euskirchen. The town had been battered by flooding after a local river broke its banks amid the heavy rain. The volunteers discovered during their visit that almost all of the relief workers, volunteers, and local residents they met were getting by on bread and sausages. Since there was still no electricity or gas locally, cooking was inconvenient. The team thus decided that Tzu Chi could provide hot food to help people through the difficult time.

Volunteers asked Sabine Preiser-Marian, the mayor of Bad Münstereifel, about the possibility of Tzu Chi offering vegetarian hot meals in her town. The mayor heartedly agreed, so the volunteers instantly set to work. They decided to rent a food truck for their meal service.

Their service was launched on August 13. Many people turned up for Tzu Chi's food, including volunteer workers, soldiers, medical workers, civil



**Volunteers prepare food for their free meal service in Bad Münstereifel.**

COURTESY OF TZU CHI HAMBURG

engineers, and local residents. The volunteers responsible for preparing the food were kept very busy—they served 200 servings of food during lunch hours on that first day.

A disaster response worker from a neighboring village, Iversheim, visited Tzu Chi's food truck on August 14. He asked volunteers if they could also provide food for people in that village. Volunteers readily agreed. On that very day, they delivered 30 servings of food to the village, five minutes away. Starting the next day, a government worker in Iversheim notified the Tzu Chi team every morning how many meals the village would need for that day. Volunteers would then deliver enough food to the village to cover the need.

A civil engineer, after receiving some food from Tzu Chi's food truck, said that they were so busy



**After severe flooding hit western Germany in July 2021, Tzu Chi volunteers in Europe rented a food truck and parked it in the historic town of Bad Münstereifel to serve hot meals to flood victims and disaster response workers.**

COURTESY OF TZU CHI HAMBURG



working to help local areas recover from the flooding that they didn't have time for a real meal. He was happy and grateful that Tzu Chi volunteers were able to come and serve them such delicious and healthy food as they worked. He extended his deepest appreciation for such a thoughtful service.

Tzu Chi volunteer Lin Sen-xi (林森喜) said, "Some people come for the food every day, and even take some home for their families. Seeing how they are enjoying our food gives us energy to work with even greater relish."

By August 20, volunteers had given out 2,100 hot meals. The meal service was scheduled to continue until mid-September.

Malaysia

The Malaysian government announced on July 1 that an enhanced movement control order (EMCO) would be imposed on most of Selangor state and parts of Kuala Lumpur for a period of 14 days, effective July 3. The two places were at the epicenter of the latest wave of COVID-19 in the country. On the second day into the movement control order, the Tzu Chi Kuala Lumpur and Selangor branch learned that 2,450 low-income families in eight public housing neighborhoods in Kuala Lumpur needed help with food to get through the period of restrictions. After confirming their need with Kuala Lumpur's social welfare

department, a Tzu Chi team met and decided to supply those households with a week's worth of food until government aid could be provided.

As soon as the meeting was over, the team sprang into action to arrange for the purchase and transportation of the needed items. At the same time, they sent out a message asking volunteers living near the Kuala Lumpur Jing Si Hall to help pack the food items the next day. Only those volunteers who had received at least one COVID shot were allowed to participate in the packing. The response to the call for action was enthusiastic—30 helpers were needed, but 50 people showed up on July 5 ready to help.

An unexpected downpour on July 5 delayed the arrival of some supplies, but volunteers still managed to get 700 packages of goods ready and transported to a site designated by the social welfare department before the 8 p.m. curfew for distribution to some of the underserved households. Shearil Nadia, a government official, was impressed with Tzu Chi's efficiency. She pointed out that the help of Tzu Chi and other charity organizations made them feel that they were not working alone during this difficult time, and that there were many people in the nation who cared for the needy. This gave them more courage and hope to plow ahead and help underserved people weather the coronavirus crisis.

Nearly 40 volunteers arrived at the Jing Si Hall for more packing the next day, July 6. After another half day's work, the rest of the supplies had been packed and were transported to the social welfare department.

Tzu Chi's effort to aid the needy was made possible thanks to the help of many warm-hearted people. Serba Wangi, a rice wholesale company, donated 450 bags of rice to help with the effort when they learned why Tzu Chi was purchasing rice from them. The company sold another 2,000 bags to the foundation at a discounted price.

Each family received supplies including rice, flour, sugar, salt, soy sauce, cooking oil, condensed milk, coffee, tea, and other food items. Volunteers also prepared some baby and adult diapers, sanitary napkins, and formula milk for families who needed these items.

One of the volunteers who helped pack the supplies was Yap Tien See (葉天賜). He had just suffered a relapse of lung cancer in June this year, but volunteered to help nonetheless. "I want to do my best to give while I still can," he said. "I hope the supplies make it into the hands of the needy as soon as possible."

Volunteers in Malaysia pack goods to be delivered to needy families impacted by an enhanced movement control order enacted by the Malaysian government in July 2021. The movement control order, which applied to parts of Selangor and Kuala Lumpur, was established in response to rising COVID cases.

SAM PIN FOOK



Directory of Tzu Chi Offices Worldwide

TAIWAN

Hualien: Headquarters  
Tel: 886-3-8266779  
Fax: 886-3-8267776  
Taipei: Tzu Chi Humanitarian Center  
Tel: 886-2-28989000  
Fax: 886-2-28989994

ARGENTINA

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Fax: 54-11-43140252

AUSTRALIA

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Fax: 61-7-32727283

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*Compassion is not only expressed through words; it is to be realized through service to humanity.*

*—Dharma Master Cheng Yen*

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