

慈濟

# Tzu Chi

## Buddhism in Action

New Classrooms for Nepal's  
Quake-Impacted Schools



BUDDHIST TZU CHI FOUNDATION



March 2024



# Strength in Unity

Translated by Teresa Chang

A powerful earthquake, measuring 7.6 in magnitude, struck the Noto Peninsula of Japan's Ishikawa Prefecture on New Year's Day in 2024. The news footage captured the intensity of the shaking, striking fear into the hearts of residents. Our volunteers in Japan promptly reported on their safety and gathered at our Tokyo office to learn more about the tremor and take stock of available relief supplies. Upon identifying an affected area where assistance could be provided, they quickly prepared to launch a hot meal service for survivors amidst the harsh cold. The recipients of these meals were deeply grateful and impressed by the deliciousness of the vegetarian food.

Our volunteers acted swiftly in the aftermath of the earthquake, serving hot meals to nourish those affected. They also prepared blankets for distribution, aiming to provide warmth and comfort to those in need. Whenever a disaster strikes, our volunteers in the affected region rise to the occasion, supported by all Tzu Chi volunteers worldwide. In addition to providing direct aid, they work to raise relief funds and inspire others to join them in aiding the needy, fostering a spirit of compassion and encouraging collective acts of kindness.

Tzu Chi will soon mark its 60th anniversary. Rooted in selfless Great Love, our foundation has steadily progressed from humble beginnings to where we are today. I often say, "Within a grain of rice lies the sun and the moon." What do I mean by this? Cultivating rice involves sowing the seeds, nurturing the sprouts, plowing, planting the seedlings, weeding, and finally harvesting the crop. Sunlight and water are also indispensable. Even if just one component is lacking, the desired outcome becomes unattainable. Similarly, all the right conditions must be present for a noble cause to flourish. This requires the concerted efforts of many people.

I love all people in the world, but I cannot reach everyone personally. My heart is filled with gratitude towards all Tzu Chi volunteers for enabling my love to extend to so many individuals worldwide. Our volunteers have not only dedicated their efforts to fulfilling our missions of charity, medicine, education, and culture, but have also inspired others to join our cause by earnestly sharing with them Tzu Chi's philosophy and guiding principles. The gratitude in my heart for everyone is immense. Tzu Chi began on a small scale

58 years ago, but over time, our sphere of care has expanded. This wouldn't have been possible without more people joining in to help. I believe that as more individuals unite in love and harmony to serve the world, our world will undoubtedly transform into a Pure Land.

When we have an abundance of food and secure meals, we should remember those who are starving. Living in a peaceful and prosperous country, we should remind ourselves, "I am truly fortunate!" As we acknowledge our blessings, let's not forget to sow more blessings by extending love and generosity to others. When all the blessings we create combine, they form a powerful force for good in the world.

Always cultivate a loving heart. Embrace kindness towards others and appreciate everything you encounter. With a loving heart, you naturally empathize with and want to help others when they are in need. However, it's vital to understand that giving isn't about being the provider; it's about cherishing the opportunity to make a difference. Those of us capable of giving are truly blessed, as it allows us to enrich the meaning of our lives. Thus, let us care for others with hearts full of gratitude.

Every day when I open my eyes, my first thoughts are always ones of gratitude. I'm thankful for the peace of yesterday, allowing me to sleep well. I'm grateful for the people and events of yesterday, leaving me content and prepared to start another fulfilling day. Joining hands with numerous good-hearted individuals worldwide in wholeheartedly dedicating ourselves to serving the needy brings a profound sense of joy and fulfillment. Each day consists of 86,400 seconds, which may seem abundant, yet they swiftly pass like the ticking of a clock. Life is fleeting; if we are heedless of time, our days slip away unnoticed. Every second eventually passes regardless of our time management skills, so we must wisely use every moment and make it count by doing good.

A bodhisattva compassionately delivers the needy from suffering, spreading love to benefit the world. Let's all strive to emulate this spirit. Never underestimate what you can contribute. When droplets of water come together to form a river, they are capable of nourishing large areas of dry land; when the strengths of many people combine, it can bring relief to countless others. Let's be ever more mindful. ❀

# Tzu Chi

Bimonthly

March 2024



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**On the Cover:**  
Photo by Willy Ang



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

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# Tzu Chi Chronicles

## Notable Highlights From Jan. 14 to Mar. 1, 2024

**Jan. 14 - 18**

### **Serbia**

Provided winter clothing and mattress covers to support refugees

Though temperatures were approaching zero degrees Celsius, some refugees in Serbia were wearing short sleeves and slippers. In an effort to help this disadvantaged group, Tzu Chi volunteers visited refugee camps in the country in mid-January to distribute and donate 3,500 winter garments and 5,000 mattress covers. This ongoing support from Tzu Chi began in 2016. Since then, volunteers have inspired more than 20 local Serbian individuals to work with them to assist refugees in their country.

**Jan. 31**

### **Mozambique**

The country's largest secondary school is inaugurated

After Cyclone Idai, Tzu Chi assumed the responsibility of rebuilding 23 schools in Mozambique. The largest of these is ESG Mafambisse in Dondo District, Sofala Province, which is also the country's largest secondary school. The completed school was officially handed over on January 31, with President Filipe Nyusi personally attending the event and expressing his gratitude. Tzu Chi has successfully reconstructed five schools to date, with construction in progress for 13 others.

**Feb. 5**

### **The Philippines**

Prompt aid for flood-affected families

In late January, heavy rainfall triggered flooding and landslides in Davao Region, in the southern Philippines. Tzu Chi volunteers conducted a disaster assessment on February 5 and swiftly distributed relief supplies on the 7th in the remote and severely affected Barangay Magupising, in Dujali. They provided more than ten essential items, including rice, multifunctional folding beds, and blankets. Seven hundred and fifty-one households benefited from the assistance.

**Feb. 5**

### **Poland**

Care for Ukrainian refugees and local needy people

Tzu Chi volunteers in Opole, Poland, have been extending assistance to Ukrainians fleeing the war in their homeland. Their aid includes offering Polish language classes. Recently, they reached out to vulnerable refugees staying in a budget-friendly hostel and other places, distributing shopping vouchers to alleviate their needs. They also helped needy Polish people. From December 2023 to February 2024, they organized five distributions of shopping vouchers, aiding 1,100 Ukrainian refugees and local residents.



**Feb. 10 - 14**

**Taiwan**

Environmental efforts for 15 consecutive years at a temple in Tainan

Tzu Chi volunteers in Tainan have engaged in a regular activity every Lunar New Year since 2010. They visit Luermen Shengmu Temple in this southern city to salvage recyclable garbage and advocate for environmental conservation. This year, with a million worshippers flocking to the temple to pray for peace and participate in a fair, volunteers worked more than a hundred shifts from the first to the fifth day of the Lunar New Year, promoting resource recycling and vegetarianism to safeguard the Earth.

**Feb. 16**

**Japan**

Second phase of aid launched for survivors of Noto earthquake

Residents of the Noto Peninsula in Ishikawa Prefecture faced challenges following a strong earthquake on January 1, including snow, collapsed or damaged houses, and water outages. To help them through this difficult time, Tzu Chi Japan distributed hot meals in the town of Anamizu, providing 7,000 servings from January 13 to 29. On February 8, volunteers once again entered the disaster area to prepare for further aid work. They initiated a work relief program on the 16th, employing local residents to assist in meal preparation for distribution. They also assessed the possibility of distributing blankets and providing financial aid. (For more information, please refer to pages 36 to 42.)

**Mar. 1**

**Taiwan**

Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital is upgraded to a medical center

To ensure the quality of medical services and to protect patients' rights in Taiwan, the Joint Commission of Taiwan, a healthcare accreditation and quality improvement organization, implemented a new hospital accreditation system in 2007. Taipei Tzu Chi Hospital participated in medical center evaluations for the first time in 2013 and attained quasi-medical center status in 2016. Exemplary performance in 2023 assessments led to its elevation to a full-fledged medical center in 2024.



# From Lumbini to Bodh Gaya

Touching Lives and Cultivating Love

*Tzu Chi volunteers from Singapore and Malaysia have been stationed in Lumbini, Nepal, for two years, carrying out charitable efforts. They have since expanded their endeavors to Bodh Gaya, India. They collaborate with local volunteers, working together to deliver love and uplift communities in these regions.*

**Volunteers visit Samphul Devi (center), a stroke patient, in Bodh Gaya, India. During these visits, local volunteers learn from volunteers from Malaysia and Singapore how to interact with the needy.**

LIN JIA-RU





# A Day in Bodh Gaya

By Ding Bi-hui

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

*As the sun rises over Bodh Gaya, Tzu Chi volunteers convene to embark on a day of philanthropic work. Each day is a new day to make a difference.*

The Tzu Chi Bodh Gaya office, standing tall next to adjacent fields, is just a 20-minute walk from the site of the Buddha's enlightenment. Its walls are slowly illuminated as the morning sun rises at six. Locals arriving from all directions and volunteers staying at the office or nearby hotels meet on the first floor after seven. After exchanging greetings of "Good morning," everyone is ready to start a day's work.

A meeting focusing on the day's tasks soon began. English is used for discussions during the meeting, although local volunteers typically converse in Hindi and those from Singapore, Malaysia, and Taiwan speak Mandarin. Midway through the meeting, tuk-tuks carrying female villagers from Silaunja arrive. They have come here to attend the sewing class that starts at eight. Participants from Bakraur village will arrive later for a second sewing class. Both sessions are led by sewing teacher Pinke Devi.

Around 20 volunteers head out after the morning meeting, forming groups and boarding tuk-tuks to travel to impoverished villages or schools around Bodh Gaya. With winter in full swing, the temperature undergoes significant changes within a single day, ranging from seven or eight degrees Celsius (44.6-46.4°F) in the early morning to over 20 degrees Celsius (68°F) by noon. Volunteers from outside of India strive to adapt to the local conditions as they work tirelessly to provide warmth and support to those in need.

## Empowering change

The caste system in India has endured for thousands of years, significantly impacting the lives of its residents. With a current population exceeding 1.4 billion, a staggering 230 million people at the bottom level live lives of poverty. According to United Nations statistics, India has the highest number of impoverished people in the world.

Tzu Chi volunteers from Malaysia and Singapore have established a presence in Bodh Gaya, nestled in the Gaya district in the Indian state of Bihar, since March 2023. Bodh Gaya holds a special significance among the eight major Buddhist pilgrimage sites, yet today stands as one of the poorest regions in India. Volunteers hope to do what they can to improve local lives. Building on their experiences in Lumbini, the Buddha's birthplace in Nepal, they have extended their efforts to Bodh Gaya, launching local charitable, medical, and educational initiatives.

Among these initiatives, the charity team conducts visits to and aids the impoverished. They also organize vocational training classes in sewing, English, and computers to help residents acquire valuable skills. Among other tasks, the medical team's responsibilities include accompanying patients for medical treatment, providing home care, offering health checkups, and assisting villagers in overcoming alcohol addiction.

The education team currently cares for ten schools. They share Dharma Master Cheng Yen's inspirational aphorisms in the schools and organize athletic events to foster teacher-parent-student relationships. Volunteers from Taiwan have organized into a relay for documenting work—when one team leaves, another arrives to take over their work. They work with local volunteer Amar Kumar to record the current situation in Bodh Gaya, document volunteers' work, and capture stories of kindness and goodness through images, text, and videos.

Local volunteers play an indispensable role in the different teams' activities. Being members of the local community, they provide helpful insights into the local environment and the living conditions of the residents. This shortens the learning curve for overseas volunteers, making the local volunteers valuable assistants in carrying out Tzu



Chi's philanthropic endeavors locally.

Whether staying long-term or visiting short-term, volunteers from overseas follow the mission of "Spread the Dharma and Benefit All Beings." Abiding by Master Cheng Yen's instructions, they also strive to inspire more locals to join Tzu Chi, hoping that one day they might stand on their own. But until that becomes a reality, volunteers from outside of India still need to visit to organize local affairs. Charitable aid and medical care involve long-term commitments. How do overseas volunteers, constrained by the limited duration of their stay and their own personal and professional responsibilities in their home countries, sustain assistance without falling short? The story of Tetari Kumari, a 20-year-old woman, is a good example.

In May 2023, volunteers discovered Tetari in Rattibigha village. She had struggled with a foot ailment since childhood, which eventually led to her foot being amputated at the ankle. Unfortunately, the surgery didn't improve her condition, nor could she afford additional treatment, due to her family's poverty. Learning of her years of enduring pain and swelling, volunteers decided to assist her in obtaining further medical treatment, pledging to cover all the expenses for

**Volunteers pose with students and teachers at a school in Silaunja after sharing Master Cheng Yen's aphorisms there.**

TENG PICK CHEANG

another amputation surgery and the fitting of a prosthetic limb.

Tetari returned home after the surgery, but the inadequate medical conditions in the local village and the poor conditions of her own home environment hindered her recovery. In response, Tzu Chi's medical team visited her daily to change the dressing. Volunteer Lim Kim Yan (林金燕), a retired nurse from Singapore, cared for her for months. However, due to personal matters, she had to temporarily return to Singapore. To fill in for her, another retired nurse, Chong Ah Yok (章愛玉), was specially called in from Singapore to take over Tetari's care. Chong arrived on November 20. Her luggage, weighing up to 30 kilograms (66 pounds), consisted mainly of supplies for Tetari, including disinfectant gauze, bandages, disinfectant solutions, and surgical instruments. She continued changing Tetari's dressings for more than a month.

During this period, the pus from Tetari's wound gradually changed from a light blue to a pale yellow, and with the removal of necrotic tis-



sue, the wound healed day by day. When Chong prepared to return to Singapore on December 29, she visited Tetari again that morning to change her dressings. By then, the once fist-sized, horrible-looking wound had shrunk into a small area. She was relieved to see Tetari no longer suffering.

Chong's dedication went beyond mere time and expertise; it reflected a compassionate heart that could not bear to see others suffer. Tetari and her parents deeply felt this compassion. When Chong was leaving that day, Tetari's father, Sukar Manjhi, who usually stood solemnly outside during the dressing changes, took the initiative to join Chong and others for a group photo.

### **The ripple effect of goodness**

Currently, Tzu Chi's primary focus for charitable assistance and medical care includes Bodh

**A woman in Bakraur greets Tzu Chi volunteers, who are a familiar sight to local villagers now.**

YE JIN-HONG

Gaya and nearby areas. Villages such as Silaunja, Bakraur, Ganga Bigha, Jagdishpur, Ghogharia, and Hathiyar have all borne witness to the philanthropic efforts of volunteers.

Among the villages, Jagdishpur sits at the foothills of Pragbodhi Hill. (Pragbodhi means "prior to enlightenment.") It is believed that the Buddha spent six years practicing asceticism in a cave on this hill during his journey seeking enlightenment. This cave is now a significant tourist destination. Many villagers in Jagdishpur sustain themselves by seeking alms from pilgrims who visit this sacred site.

On December 14, 2023, a Tzu Chi team of five members, including Chong Ah Yok and Endrajeet



Paswan—who also served as a translator—visited Jagdishpur to distribute protein-rich beans to malnourished villagers. As their tuk-tuk came to a halt at the village entrance, children eagerly approached, extending their hands and asking for money in simple English. This was a familiar scene for the volunteers, who had frequented the village to visit underprivileged households, conduct health checkups, and distribute aid.

The volunteers distributed beans and conducted weight checks for seven households during their visit. Unfortunately, they also encountered villagers who shouted at them and complained about not receiving supplies. The volunteers simply smiled and nodded as they passed the hecklers, but Surendra Paswan, the driver of the tuk-tuk carrying the volunteers and volunteer Endrajeet's elder brother, couldn't contain his anger when he saw and heard the irrational villagers. He shouted back at them.

When he saw this, Endrajeet took off his volunteer vest and asked his brother to wear it. He then invited his brother to participate in the subsequent bean distribution. When other volunteers asked Endrajeet why he did that, he replied that he wanted his brother to think of himself as a Tzu Chi volunteer. It was a way to remind him to maintain inner calm. When one is calm, one is better able to handle challenging situations.

The elder brother understood his younger brother's intentions and reflected on his behavior. He said that he had seen how his brother had changed after working with other Tzu Chi volun-

**Outside the Tzu Chi Bodh Gaya office, tuk-tuks carrying volunteers and aid supplies are ready to set out for visits to those in need.**

LIN JIA-RU

teers—he had begun to speak more softly, and his temper had significantly improved. He was happy for his brother and had begun thinking of becoming a volunteer too.

The ripple effect of goodness was spreading. When the team reached Ganga Bigha village, a local suddenly emerged, bringing fresh guavas to the volunteers. Endrajeet immediately recognized him, for it was none other than Tetari's father, Sukar Manjhi.

Volunteers return to the Tzu Chi office from various locations as the sun sets each day, often crossing the bridge over the Niranjana River. Over 2,500 years ago, the Buddha emerged from his cave of ascetic practice, bathed himself in the Niranjana River, and accepted milk-rice from a woman named Sujata. With renewed strength, he crossed the river and ultimately attained enlightenment under a bodhi tree.

The very site where the Buddha reached enlightenment is now home to the renowned Mahabodhi Temple. On clear days, volunteers can see the temple bathed in the sunset while crossing the Niranjana River. In these moments of serene beauty, they offer silent prayers, hoping that the Buddha's teachings of kindness, wisdom, and inner peace can flourish locally. They envision that the spark of light kindled in one heart can pass from one to another, illuminating the path for ever more people. ❁

# Knitting Hats, Stitching Hope

**Information provided by Goh Lam Kia**

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Photo by Raj Kumar

“I’ve woven five hats and earned 1,500 rupees [US\$11.28] during this time,” said Sangita Dhobi, a resident of Manaora village in Lumbini, Nepal. “I immediately used my earnings to pay off my children’s outstanding school fees.” Sangita had joined a Tzu Chi workshop for knitting hats to supplement her family’s income. Her family of eight barely managed to get by on her earnings from the crops on a leased plot of land and her husband’s unpredictable income from odd jobs. When times were toughest, their meals consisted only of rice with salt. Regardless of the hardships, Sangita remained committed to ensuring her children’s education, seeing it as the key to breaking the cycle of poverty for her family. “I’m grateful for this opportunity to earn some extra money with my own hands,” she said.

Tzu Chi employs local women to knit hats, providing them with yarn and training. After passing quality inspections, each hat fetches the women 300 rupees (US\$2.25), surpassing the 30 rupees people could earn in Kathmandu, Nepal’s capital. This not only provides the women with income but has also resulted in the distribution of knitted hats to needy households and earthquake

victims in western Nepal. In addition to Khambhe and Manaora villages, there is also a group of women knitting hats at the Tzu Chi Lumbini office. From October 2023 to January 2024, over a thousand hats were crafted for charitable distribution.

Since the inception of this initiative, participating women have tirelessly pursued their craft. Upon entering the villages, one can see small groups of women sitting, squatting, or standing, wholly engrossed in knitting. When it comes time to collect their earnings, they eagerly step forward to sign their names or affix their thumbprints to their earning statements, joyfully counting the notes they get in return. Some even take out small bills from the stack and drop them into a coin bank to help others.

Urmila, another participant, shared that she gives her wages to her husband for the purchase of gasoline and fertilizers. She explained that gasoline powers the water pump for irrigation, while fertilizers facilitate the growth of wheat seedlings. “We now no longer think that poor people like us can only beg for charity from others,” she said. ●●



# Monthly Charity Day

By Ding Bi-hui

Edited and translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Photo by Beh Chun How

**T**zu Chi volunteers have been conducting home visits to impoverished households in Bodh Gaya, India, since April 2023. Regular visits are made to those in dire need, with daily necessities distributed on the monthly Charity Day, easing concerns about sustenance for destitute families.

Currently, 26 households receive long-term support. The provisions on Charity Day, including rice, whole wheat flour, chickpeas, pigeon peas, potatoes, cooking oil, and other foods, are tailored to family size. A few villagers receive additional assistance for rent and milk expenses. Alongside volunteers from Singapore and Malaysia, local schoolteachers, sewing class participants, and other residents form teams to distribute the goods. They first obtain fresh supplies from wholesalers before commencing their visits.

Puniya Devi, a 75-year-old resident of Bakraur, is one of the milk recipients. Abandoned by her children, she resides in a dim hut, her only company being her granddaughter, who is still in school. On one Charity Day, since her grand-

daughter hadn't returned home from school, volunteers directly collected milk from the supplier to deliver to Puniya. The supplier assured the volunteers that the granddaughter collected the milk every day at the usual time, asking them not to worry.

Sudha Kumari, a volunteer who joined the charity team in November 2023, expressed her fondness for charity work. She grew up in a family with comfortable means, with her father working in a government agency, so she had little exposure to extreme poverty until her home visits with Tzu Chi. Witnessing the hardships of others, she is eager to contribute her efforts. She said that she not only aids her fellow compatriots but also learns how to help others by volunteering with Tzu Chi.

Conducting home visits to the needy can be challenging for volunteers, as many beneficiary families don't have phones. Volunteers must sometimes make multiple trips before reaching the family. However, due to their prolonged presence in the villages, locals warmly greet them, with some even joining in efforts to care for their neighbors. ♣





# New Classrooms Sprout From Rocky Terrain

Information provided by Goh Lam Kia

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Photos by Willy Ang

A powerful earthquake, registering at magnitude 5.6, struck the Jajarkot District of Karnali Province, western Nepal, on November 3, 2023. It claimed 157 lives, making it the deadliest tremor in Nepal since 2015. The quake also resulted in severe damage to buildings in the area, including numerous homes and schools. Tzu Chi volunteers in Lumbini, located over 300 kilometers (186 miles) away, swiftly mobilized for disaster assessment.

The geological landscape of the highland disaster area differed significantly from the plains of Lumbini. Unlike the thatched or earthen houses

commonly seen in Lumbini's rural areas, villagers here used an abundant supply of rocks to build their homes. Observing teachers and students working in open-air classes after the earthquake, volunteers offered to construct temporary classrooms until more lasting facilities could be built. School authorities planned to erect permanent buildings on the original sites to replace the damaged ones, so volunteers opted for prefabricated structures that could be easily disassembled or relocated elsewhere. Cement boards were used for flooring instead of traditional cement, facilitating future removals or relocations.



Due to resource constraints in the mountainous region, building materials were transported from Tzu Chi's base in Lumbini. A work relief program was initiated, with assembly workers recruited locally in the disaster area. Under the guidance of Tzu Chi construction volunteers, villagers quickly acquired the necessary skills to assemble the classrooms. The income they received from the program was expected to help them through the difficult times.

The construction of temporary classrooms began on December 3, 2023, with volunteers from Lumbini dedicating their New Year to helping in



the disaster area. Simultaneously, the Tzu Chi team in Lumbini was also actively engaged. Volunteers, along with villagers participating in a work relief program, raced against time to prepare building materials, including doors, windows, and wall panels, for delivery to the disaster zone via truck.

In total, Tzu Chi erected 30 classrooms across five schools, benefiting 1,700 students. Malaysian volunteer Zhang Bo Lin (張栢林) elaborated on the construction, explaining that the classroom roofs consisted of three layers: plywood at the base, sponge insulation in the middle, and galvanized zinc panels on the exterior, providing both insulation and soundproofing. “We opted for thicker wall panels compared to those used in standard prefab houses to minimize potential damage caused by children running around and bumping into them,” he further explained.

Zhang particularly expressed gratitude for the villagers involved in the cash-for-work program in Lumbini, who preassembled a portion of the prefab structure materials and welded frames before having them transported to the disaster area. “Due to poor road conditions in the mountainous areas,” he added, “trucks had to be replaced with tractors halfway through their journeys to the disaster area.” Some schools were inaccessible even by tractor, so villagers worked together to move building materials by hand to construction sites.

Upon completion of the classrooms at each school, volunteers distributed textbooks to students, along with handmade soap and knitted hats made by participants of Tzu Chi’s vocational training classes in Lumbini.

The nine classrooms for Bheri Tribeni

Secondary School were completed by mid-January, amidst temperatures hovering around zero degrees Celsius (32°F). Construction then commenced for four additional prefab structures intended for use as school dormitories. Several villagers had become aspiring Tzu Chi volunteers. On January 4, they traveled to Lumbini to participate in a Tzu Chi blessing ceremony. They were seeds that might help Tzu Chi’s love take root locally. ❁

### **An Overview of Tzu Chi’s Disaster Relief Efforts in Nepal**

- Nepal experienced severe flooding in 1993. Tzu Chi promptly offered aid and subsequently, in 1995, completed four Great Love Villages with permanent housing in three districts.
- In 2015, a powerful earthquake struck Nepal. Tzu Chi volunteers from various countries collaborated in a relay effort to carry out the foundation’s relief efforts, with one team arriving to take over from another. They distributed aid, provided medical services, served hot meals, and erected temporary classrooms in affected areas, including Bhaktapur. Their collective endeavors helped more than 210,000 people. (Repeated services are counted as separate aid recipients.)
- Following another significant earthquake in November 2023, Tzu Chi built 30 temporary classrooms across five schools in Jajarkot District. The foundation also plans to supply building materials to affected households to support them in rebuilding their homes.



# Teaching Sustainability

By Li Qiu-yue, Tzu Chi Teachers Association

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Graphic by Zhong Ting-jia

*Audio-visual resources and hands-on experiences are effective methods to foster students' environmental awareness amid the demands of a full curriculum.*



A teacher asked: “I want to share the importance of environmental protection with students, but parents want me to spend more time improving exam scores. How can I strike a balance between the two?”

The aim of education is to help students become well-rounded in morality, intelligence, physical fitness, social skills, and aesthetics. While

teachers and students in junior and senior high schools face pressures related to academic advancement and the pace of the curriculum, it is vital that environmental education is not neglected. Failing to teach and implement environmental protection is certain to yield adverse consequences for global citizens.

What is the best way to strike a balance

between improving academic exam scores and sharing the importance of environmental protection? Teachers can consider the following methods:

### **Use audio-visual resources**

Teachers can allocate five minutes of class time to watch a short environmental video, making efficient use of valuable time without significantly disrupting the schedule. I did this before I retired as a schoolteacher, and favored public service commercials from Tzu Chi's Da Ai TV and thought-provoking videos produced by academic institutions or environmental organizations. I remember watching with students a memorable scene of a polar bear on a slowly sinking, drifting iceberg. The polar bear gently waved its paw, singing, "The time has come; I must bid you farewell." Eventually, the polar bear and the iceberg were submerged into the sea. There was no gore, no loud cries, only a poignant and overwhelming sense of loss.

After the video, Student A asked, "Teacher, how can we save polar bears?" Student B followed with, "How many polar bears are left now?" I tasked them with researching at home and sharing their findings the next day.

During the subsequent sharing session, they highlighted that adopting a vegetarian diet could slow down global warming, thus preserving polar bear habitats. One student mentioned, "Due to global warming and climate change, the Arctic is warming four times faster than other parts of the world." Another student added, "The polar bear population in Churchill, northern Canada, has declined by nearly half since the 1980s." These environmental facts inspired students to consciously reduce their carbon footprint. The seeds of environmental awareness had quietly taken root and sprouted in their hearts.

### **Share short articles**

I've noticed that environmental conservation is well taught and effectively implemented in elementary schools in Taiwan. However, there is a decline by teachers in actively promoting environmental awareness as students progress to secondary school.

As a former schoolteacher, when time constraints hindered video viewing, I provided short articles for students to read and write reflections on. This approach not only enhanced their environmental knowledge but also cultivated their writing skills.

Over a decade ago, when the movie *2012* was released, I encouraged my students to watch it. Shortly afterward, I came across a compelling article by Mr. Zhuang Xiao-ming (莊曉明), titled "The Catastrophes of Nature." I promptly shared it with students for a reflective writing piece. Nearly everyone's reflections referred to these words by Mr. Zhuang: "Forgetfulness has become a common excuse for people to repeat their mistakes. When heaven cannot awaken people to their foolish actions, the only way to get their attention is through recurring destructive forces, such as unusual weather and disasters." Such articles prompted students to contemplate questions like: "What terrible damage has humanity done to the Earth?," "How can we achieve energy conservation and carbon reduction in our daily lives?," or "How can we avoid harming the ecosystem?" When these reflections lead to action, I'll have achieved my goal.

### **Introduce hands-on experiences**

In an effort to deepen students' awareness of environmental protection, I once organized activities where students and parents joined me in cleaning up litter at parks and Monkey Mountain in Kaohsiung, southern Taiwan. Students returned with the following observations: "Many residents were careless with cigarette butts. I collected over a hundred of them today!," "Someone had shoved an unfinished beverage can into a tree branch, forcing us to climb the tree to retrieve it. A classmate ended up getting the remaining beverage spilled on him!," and "It's sad to see the beauty of the mountain marred by used tissues, filled garbage bags, and beverage cans. We must speak up and remind people it's everyone's responsibility to love the Earth."

These experiences inspired my students to reduce their use of disposable utensils and carry their own water bottles when going out. When they noticed classmates drinking beverages, they reminded them to rinse the container and put it in the recycling bin after finishing their drink.

Convenience often trumps environmental considerations in today's fast-paced modern life. Emphasizing environmental protection becomes ever more crucial. Even amidst academic pressures, teachers can effectively encourage eco-consciousness by using resources like short films and articles. Let's dedicate time to raising environmental awareness, fulfilling our responsibility as Earth citizens and contributing to the well-being of future generations on our blue planet. ❁❁

# Rough Seas Will Always Pass

By Chen Jin-guo

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Photo by Yan Lin-zhao

*Obstacles couldn't deter these determined volunteers from bringing relief to an ALS patient on a remote offshore island.*

I'm a Tzu Chi volunteer based in Hualien, eastern Taiwan. Recently, a story shared during a Tzu Chi study group session deeply resonated with me.

Brother Xu Wen-hu (許文虎) is a fellow volunteer residing in Magong on the main island of Penghu, an archipelago off the southwestern coast of Taiwan. His mother was diagnosed with dementia, so a foreign caregiver was hired to aid in her daily care. In October 2022, this caregiver learned about Tzu Chi's assistive device program from Xu and promptly informed him about a fellow Indonesian providing care for a patient with ALS (also known as Lou Gehrig's disease) on Niao Islet, an offshore island of Penghu. The caregiver described the challenges faced by her petite compatriot: the ALS patient she cared for was a large and sturdy man, and the lack of assistive equipment made tasks like changing his clothes or assisting with his bathing very difficult. She inquired if Tzu Chi could offer help in this situation.

Xu himself is a member of the Tzu Chi assistive device team in Penghu. He is well aware of the lack of medical resources on a remote island like Niao Islet. He also understands the inconveniences confronting bedridden patients without assistive equipment like an electric bed. Despite the formidable northeasterly winds and turbulent seas typical of Penghu in October, he decided to brave the 50-minute boat trip from Magong to Niao Islet to visit the ALS patient for an assessment.

When Xu arrived at the home of the patient, whose last name was Chen, he discovered that he had been bedridden for some time. Mr. Chen's traditional wooden bed was clearly too low and not

conducive to his care. Xu spoke with Mr. Chen's father and suggested switching to an electric bed. He also recommended replacing Mr. Chen's standard wheelchair with a high-back one and providing a wheeled commode chair for easier movement into the bathroom for a shower. The elderly father was very thankful for Xu's thoughtfulness and couldn't stop expressing his gratitude.

The electric bed was very heavy, weighing over a hundred kilograms (220 pounds). Transporting it from the main island of Penghu to Niao Islet required careful consideration of weather conditions. Since fishermen have a better understanding of sea conditions, Xu asked Mr. Chen's father, a fisherman, to notify him in advance when the weather was stabilizing to facilitate transportation arrangements.

The sea conditions remained harsh for days following Xu's visit, then stretched to weeks. Xu was impatient for the weather to improve. Finally, on November 9, Xu received a call from Mr. Chen's father indicating that the weather was about to get better. Xu immediately arranged logistics, and on November 11, accompanied by volunteers Cai You-ren (蔡有仁) and Lu Qiong-lang (呂瓊郎), he took the 11 a.m. ferry to Niao Islet. The assistive equipment they were bringing for Mr. Chen was entrusted to a cargo boat for delivery.

They approached Niao Islet about 50 minutes later. As their boat drew near, they saw Mr. Chen's father waiting at the harbor, observing their ferry's gradual approach. Things were progressing smoothly and they were happy. Little did they know that the real challenges were just about to begin.



## Doorway dilemma

When they arrived at Mr. Chen's home with the electric bed, the volunteers discovered that, no matter how they turned it, it wouldn't fit through the front door. Thankfully, they had all the necessary tools they needed, so they immediately set to work removing the front door. That allowed them to bring the bed into the house. Then they discovered the bedroom door through which they had to carry the bed was too small too. They ended up taking that door off like before, but even after this step, the bed still wouldn't fit. The volunteers eventually had to disassemble the electric bed itself, carry it through the door in pieces, then reassemble it once inside the room.

After testing the reassembled bed and making sure it worked, the volunteers showed Mr. Chen's father and the foreign caregiver how to operate it. A rare smile appeared on the father's face when he got the hang of the controls. He insisted on treating the volunteers to lunch to express his gratitude. The volunteers politely declined, explaining that they wanted to visit the village chief and the local health center to promote Tzu Chi's assistive device services before their ferry left at 2 p.m.

Leaving the Chens' home, the group proceeded to the village chief's residence and the health center. After delivering their messages, Cai Youren bought bread from a nearby store for their lunch. Upon returning to the harbor, they were surprised to find Mr. Chen's father there. He had come to the harbor once again to express his gratitude and bid farewell to the volunteers. The sincere father's words were simple and straightforward, as he repeated "thank you" again and again to the volunteers.

Dharma Master Cheng Yen teaches that no goal is unattainable if one has a determined mind, and that nothing is impossible with diligent action. Volunteers Xu, Cai, and Lu epitomize these principles, illustrating that where there is a will, there is a way, and that every difficulty is temporary. Their inspiring story resonates as a testament to the power of compassion and an unwavering determination to aid the underserved. ❁

**Volunteer Xu Wen-hu visited Mr. Chen's home again in August 2023 to check if the electric bed provided by Tzu Chi was working well.**



# A New Leg, A New Hope

**Text and photo by Monica Chang**

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

*He encountered unforeseen health challenges in Poland after fleeing the ravages of war in Ukraine. Through his resilience and Tzu Chi's assistance, he ultimately triumphed over adversity.*



**A**t a clinic in Poznań, Poland, 72-year-old Vladimir Grankin was learning to walk again, finally realizing his long-awaited dream of wearing a prosthetic limb. He diligently worked on his recovery with his daughter, Iryna, by his side, gripping assistive bars and feeling the supporting strength beneath his amputated leg. It felt truly wonderful to stand up and walk independently!

The septuagenarian hails from Ukraine, from the city of Bakhmut in Donetsk Oblast, a conflict zone between Russia and Ukraine. Heavy casualties were sustained there after the Russian invasion began, so Grankin and his family fled to the city of Trostianets in search of refuge. "But when we arrived," he said, "we found that it had also become a controlled area of the Russian military, presenting a new challenge for our survival."

Three weeks later, with the help of a volunteer organization, the family managed to escape from Ukraine to Poland. As if the challenges of being a refugee were not hard enough, Grankin was hit with an unexpected curveball when he was diagnosed with an aneurysm in his right leg. Though he endured six surgeries, he couldn't escape the fate of an amputation, leaving him reliant on a wheelchair for mobility.

Tzu Chi volunteers met the family in March 2023 while distributing blankets to Ukrainian refugees. By June, the foundation had initiated long-term care to them, with volunteers conducting monthly visits. Grankin wasn't the only member in his family facing health issues; his wife, Olga, required thyroid and hip replacement surgeries. Their daughter had to assume the responsibility of caring for her parents, making it impossible for her to work outside the home. Needless to say, the family was confronting significant economic difficulties.

After the amputation, Grankin dreamed of standing up. In order to raise money for a prosthetic limb, which amounted to 23,400 Polish zlotys (US\$5,790), the family sold his paintings and applied to the Polish government for Ukrainian disability equipment subsidies. Even with these efforts, they were still 40 percent short of the required funds.

In August 2023, Tzu Chi volunteers from Europe called on Grankin at his home while visiting Poland. While at his home, they purchased his artwork out of their own pockets to support him in maintaining dignity while striving to stand up. However, as time passed, Grankin's muscles continued to atrophy, making the installation of a prosthetic limb more difficult. Tzu Chi thus decided to help him out by covering the remaining nec-

essary funds of 9,400 Polish zlotys (US\$2,345), customizing a prosthetic limb to fit his leg shape. Volunteers from Poznań accompanied him to a clinic for the fitting on November 20. After a prolonged wait and moments of discouragement, hope had finally arrived for Grankin.

Under the patient guidance of Dr. Tomasz Stachowiak, Grankin tried the prosthetic limb. A physical therapist explained that Grankin would undergo an intensive, 80-hour rehabilitation regimen to help him get used to the prosthetic. With the artificial limb on, Vladimir seemed to return to his youthful self, his face beaming with joy and a sense of anticipation for the unknown. Gripping the assistive bars, he took one step after another, practicing walking. His wife said, "Thanks to the Tzu Chi Foundation for their selfless assistance. Now, my husband can walk freely and start a new chapter in life."

For more than a year, Tzu Chi volunteer teams have consistently extended assistance to Ukrainian refugees. Grankin was but one of the examples. In October 2023, for example, the foundation, in cooperation with 11 organizations, launched distributions of eco-blankets (made from recycled plastic bottles), food packages, and cash cards in Warsaw, Poland, and Kyiv and Zaporizhzhia, both in Ukraine, for Ukrainians affected by the war. The aid was projected to sustain 30,000 people for two months.

With the help of physical therapy, Grankin's steps became more confident. Seeds of hope sprouted for him in a foreign land. Love and compassion are helping Ukrainians get through a tough time, but everyone sincerely hopes that the war comes to an end soon and that every step forward for the world is a step away from conflict and toward peace. ❊



**Tzu Chi volunteers pose with Grankin and his family when accompanying them to a clinic in Poznań for his prosthetic installation.** COURTESY OF MONICA CHANG

# Healing Wounds With Love

## A Look Back on 30 Years of Tzu Chi Work in Indonesia

**Narrated by Jia Wen-yu**

Compiled by Huang Xiao-qian

Edited and translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Photos courtesy of Tzu Chi Indonesia

*Tzu Chi Indonesia has forged a rich history over the past three decades,  
using the power of love to heal wounds and bring people together.*



**T**zu Chi Indonesia marked its 30-year milestone in 2023. I have been part of this incredible journey for 28 years, since 1995. I consider myself fortunate to be a part of Tzu Chi and believe that Indonesia is blessed because of the many volunteers working together here to serve our society.

Tzu Chi Indonesia currently has 18 branch offices and over 15,000 volunteers. In Jakarta, we have the distinguished Jing Si Hall, Tzu Chi schools, Tzu Chi hospitals, and a TV station. These are developments I never could have imagined when I first became a Tzu Chi volunteer.

### **The first large-scale medical program**

Liu Su-mei (劉素美) is a Tzu Chi volunteer who initiated Tzu Chi activities in Indonesia in 1993 with the wives of some Taiwanese businessmen. Their efforts laid the groundwork for Tzu Chi's presence in the country. Without Sister Su-mei's courageous commitment, the Tzu Chi organization we have in Indonesia today would not exist. For this reason, those of us with Tzu Chi Indonesia are all immensely grateful to her. Liu would go on to become CEO of Tzu Chi Indonesia.

Our efforts at first were centered on helping needy families, including providing school fees for underprivileged children. The first disaster relief effort we undertook took place after the eruption of Mount Merapi in Yogyakarta in November 1994. We raised money and donated it to the local government, enabling the construction of 12 houses for people forced to relocate due to the disaster.

In 1995, we started a collaborative program with the health bureau of Tangerang, in the province of Banten, to combat tuberculosis. It was during this time I learned that Indonesia held the second-highest global ranking for tuberculosis cases. Fortunately, the disease wasn't difficult to treat. With consistent medication, proper nutrition, and a regular lifestyle, recovery was assured in just six to nine months.

In addition to medication, Tzu Chi provided powdered milk, mung beans, rice, and other food

to supplement the nutrition of patients in the program. Our volunteers conducted biweekly visits to monitor patients' weight, checking for signs of improvement due to their increased nutrition. During such visits, we sometimes came across patients who hid mineral water within their clothing during weight checks, thus falsely showing a greater weight gain. This was either because they couldn't afford the luxury of adequate rest as prescribed by the program or had reserved nutritious food from Tzu Chi for their children. When we encountered patients doing this, we encouraged them to prioritize their recovery instead.

At the time, we were unfamiliar with tuberculosis protocols, such as wearing masks and gloves for close contact. When members of the Singapore chapter of the Tzu Chi International Medical Association saw pictures of us holding patients' hands, they urged us to prioritize the safety of ourselves when caring for others. Only then did we recognize the dangers of the bacteria.

The tuberculosis treatment program continued until 1999, providing care for a total of 1,183 patients. It marked our first major medical care effort in Indonesia and profoundly impacted me. Through this experience, I gained a deep understanding of Master Cheng Yen's teaching: "When others are hurt, we feel the pain; when others suffer, we feel the sorrow."

Back then, I worked as the secretary for Mr. Eka Tjipta Widjaja (黃奕聰), the Indonesian-Chinese founder of the Sinar Mas Group. I introduced Tzu Chi to him. On May 9, 1998, Mr. Widjaja, accompanied by his wife, Trini Dewi Lasuki, and son, Franky (黃榮年)—who would later become one of the two deputy CEOs of Tzu Chi Indonesia—visited Master Cheng Yen in Taiwan. Just a few days later, on May 13, riots erupted in Jakarta, with the primary targets of the violence being ethnic Chinese Indonesians.

In response to the anti-Chinese sentiments, Master Cheng Yen advised us to resolve hatred with love. Consequently, we distributed rice to the military and police, who played a crucial role in maintaining public order during the riots, as well as to needy residents of Jakarta and its surrounding areas. With the support of Brother Franky and the Sinar Mas Group, along with assistance from the military and police, we successfully distributed 1,100 tons of rice.

I vividly recall the severity of the situation during those tense times. On one occasion, I overheard a Sinar Mas Group employee telling Brother Franky that someone else had flown to Singapore

**Sugianto Kusuma (left center) and Franky Oesman Widjaja (right center), deputy CEOs of Tzu Chi Indonesia, along with Yen Po-wen (顏博文, center), CEO of the Tzu Chi charity mission from Taiwan, participated in an event commemorating the 30th anniversary of Tzu Chi Indonesia in September 2023.**

for his safety. As an ethnic Chinese, I felt overwhelming fear and a strong inclination to seek refuge abroad too. Hence, I was very grateful to Mr. Widjaja, Brother Franky, and others for staying put and not leaving Indonesia.

### The Angke River

In January 2002, Jakarta was hit by a devastating flood, with the most severe impact occurring downstream of the Angke River. This section of the river was heavily polluted with garbage, and its banks were densely populated with impoverished residents living in illegally constructed houses. Our volunteers ventured into flooded areas to distribute hot meals and provide free medical services to victims. One day, Mr. Widjaja said to me, “Wen-yu, I would like to invite Tzu Chi brothers, sisters, and the medical team for a meal.” He was aware of Tzu Chi volunteers’ continuous care for survivors, and with the Chinese New Year approaching, wanted to do something for us.

I will always remember the day that meal took place, February 23, 2002, a Saturday. We dined at a restaurant owned by Sugianto Kusuma (郭再源). Sugianto—who would later become another deputy CEO of Tzu Chi Indonesia—was also invited to the gathering; it was the first time he had participated in a Tzu Chi-related activity. Brother Stephen Huang (黃思賢) came all the way from Taiwan for the occasion. During the meal, Mr. Widjaja asked, “Can Tzu Chi provide more

assistance to the flood-affected residents?” He had seen on television that, even nearly two months after the flooding, many people were still living by the roadside without proper shelter. Brother Huang responded that further relief actions, especially on a large scale, would require approval from Master Cheng Yen.

Mr. Widjaja, feeling for the victims, decided to visit the Master in Taiwan. He visited the Master on March 6, accompanied by Brother Franky, Sister Su-mei, and me. During our meeting, the Master said to Mr. Widjaja, “I’d like to use your influence to mobilize entrepreneurs in Indonesia to clean up the disaster area.”

When he returned to Jakarta, Mr. Widjaja immediately called for a meeting with all Tzu Chi volunteers to discuss how to clean up the disaster area. The next day, he invited Sugianto to his office and asked, “Master Cheng Yen wants us to clean up Jakarta together. Are you willing to help?” Sugianto immediately agreed.

During the Dutch colonial period in Indonesia, many ethnic Chinese people were killed by the Dutch East India Company in a massacre and dumped into the Angke River, turning it red; hence its name Angke (Ang means “red” in Hokkien). We never imagined that as Chinese, we would have the opportunity to contribute to the cleanup of the river and build new housing villages for the relocation of people living on its banks. We aspired to transform the river into a symbol of love and warmth.



Tzu Chi Indonesia partnered with the health bureau of Tangerang, in the province of Banten, to launch a project in 1995 aimed at combating tuberculosis. Jia Wen-yu (賈文玉, center), the narrator of this article, is pictured here explaining the project to villagers.

## Safer homes

At first, many residents along the banks of the Angke River were unwilling to relocate. To persuade them, we stressed that the move wouldn't just be to a safer place but also to a better environment, complete with a school and hospital, creating a conducive setting for their children to grow up in.

Tzu Chi provided a subsidy of 500,000 Indonesian rupiah (US\$32) for each household agreeing to relocate, helping them to temporarily rent places to live. To fund the housing project, we launched a fundraising effort in Indonesia. The cost for each housing unit was 50 million Indonesian rupiah (US\$3,160), and Tzu Chi was planning to construct more than a thousand such housing units. (This would be Great Love Village I, completed in 2003; a second Great Love Village would follow, completed in 2005.)

Brother Sugianto had just joined Tzu Chi at the time, but was already a very committed supporter

of the foundation's work. He proposed a plan: if Tzu Chi couldn't raise enough for the project, he would shoulder half of the shortfall, and Brother Franky would shoulder the other half. Franky readily agreed to the plan. Later we discovered that the Sinar Mas Group, owned by Franky's family, was going through a particularly difficult period, making his offer to help even more benevolent.

We are also deeply thankful to Brother Stephen Huang, who visited Jakarta eight times during the Angke River cleanup. One evening, when I picked him up at the airport, he expressed a desire to see the river. I thought, "It's so late; what's there to see at this time?" Nevertheless, I took him there.

**Eka Tjipta Widjaja (center), the founder of the Sinar Mas Group, and his wife, Trini Dewi Lasuki, visited Dharma Master Cheng Yen in Hualien, Taiwan, in May 1998.**





Mr. Heru Budi Hartono (center in the left photo), the acting governor of Jakarta, is seen here attending the celebration of the 20th anniversary of Great Love Village I in Cengkareng in August 2023. He dedicated considerable effort to aiding the construction efforts of the village.





**The Angke River used to be called the Black Heart of Jakarta until it underwent cleanup. Illegal structures (pictured above) were built along the riverbanks. Though residents relied on the river for their daily water supply, it also became a dumping ground for wastewater and garbage.**

**Dagnas Al-Akhtur A. (left in the left photo) grew up in Great Love Village I in Cengkareng and is now a police officer. His mother, Tutin Rahayu (right in the left photo), is deeply grateful for the better life they've had since moving into the village.**

We had just cleared tons of garbage from the river at that point, but an unpleasant odor lingered. As soon as I stepped out of the car, I instinctively covered my nose. Surprisingly, as if the bad smell didn't exist, Brother Stephen calmly remarked, "Doesn't this scene resemble Venice? It would be even more romantic if someone were playing a guitar by the river." Upon hearing this, I lowered my hand from my nose. I realized that he was moved by the fact that we had undertaken such a significant charitable project to clean up the river.

In May 2023, Brother Hong Tjhin (陳豐靈) visited my office and mentioned having a meal the day before with the acting governor of Jakarta, Mr. Heru Budi Hartono. The acting governor had been a government employee in North Jakarta

two decades ago, during the Angke River cleanup and relocation of nearby residents. He spared no effort at the time to assist Tzu Chi. Brother Hong was equally dedicated—all for the betterment of Jakarta and the welfare of the underserved people we were helping.

Brother Hong shared, "I told the acting governor during the meal that Great Love Village I would celebrate its 20th anniversary in August. The governor responded emotionally, 'So soon?'" Then, in the midst of his account to me, Brother Hong suddenly fell silent. I asked him, "Are you crying?" He nodded and replied, "Yes." Reflecting on that memorable time, how could he not be filled with emotion?

Great Love Village I celebrated its 20th anni-



versary on August 26, 2023. Residents took the stage during the celebration event to share the positive transformations in their lives after moving into the village. Their children were thriving. This reinforces my belief that every endeavor we undertake in Tzu Chi is destined to yield fruitful outcomes, because our actions are not for personal gain but for the well-being of society.

### **Distributing 50,000 tons of rice**

From 2003 to 2007, Tzu Chi Indonesia distributed 50,000 tons of rice to those in need, sowing the seeds of Tzu Chi's compassion across various regions in Indonesia.

This initiative came to be after Brother Sugianto accompanied several entrepreneurs from Indonesia to Tzu Chi headquarters in Taiwan. There, they learned that Taiwan's Council of Agriculture (now the Ministry of Agriculture) was allocating 100,000 tons of rice to Tzu Chi for distribution to needy people outside of Taiwan. When Master Cheng Yen inquired about Indonesia's needs, Brother Sugianto promptly responded with "50,000 tons." When the news reached us in Jakarta, the prospect of distributing such a vast quantity left us feeling overwhelmed even before we started the work.

Each household was slated to receive 20 kilograms (44 pounds). This meant that the 50,000 tons

**From 2003 to 2007, Tzu Chi volunteers in Indonesia distributed 50,000 tons of rice provided by Taiwan's Council of Agriculture to local needy people.**

of rice would need to be distributed to 2.5 million households. The prospect of such a large-scale distribution was daunting, especially with the limited volunteer manpower we had at the time. Even so, Brother Sugianto persevered. He was taking into account that the Indonesian economy had not fully recovered after the anti-Chinese riots, and that many people were still grappling with difficulties in their lives.

Shipping the 50,000 tons of rice from Kaohsiung, southern Taiwan, to Jakarta alone cost one million U.S. dollars. Thankfully, ten entrepreneurs generously shared these expenses. Transportation costs from Jakarta to other parts of Indonesia were covered by local businesspeople in each district. I commend everyone who made the distribution effort possible. Not every country was as fortunate as Indonesia. In some countries, volunteers wished to distribute rice but couldn't afford transportation costs.

It's also worth mentioning that the distribution of 50,000 tons of rice became an event that attracted many new volunteers to Tzu Chi. Many corpo-

The Indian Ocean tsunami struck in December 2004 with devastating consequences. Aceh Province in Indonesia was one of the hardest-hit areas. There were many fatalities and the infrastructure of the area suffered severe damage (as seen in the right photo). In response, Tzu Chi built homes for those who lost their residences in the disaster. The inauguration of Great Love Village I in Aceh took place in 2005, and then-President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (pictured in the center-right in the photo below) attended the event.

PHOTO BELOW BY YAN LIN-ZHAO



rate leaders, including Brother Sugianto, Sister Li Li-ying (李麗英), Brother Franky, Sister Zou Li-ying (鄒麗英), Brother Fang Zhong-kun (方忠坤), and others, assigned their employees to assist. For example, Brother Franky instructed his employees from the Sinar Mas Group to handle warehouse storage, transportation, coordination with local governments, and even the actual distributions.

Distributing claim vouchers to potential recipients presented a significant challenge itself. Originally, during the preparatory meeting, it was agreed that distribution teams would consist of four people. But once on-site, the four-person teams split up, with individuals working alone, because the area we had to cover was so big. Working in slum areas made us anxious, and we worried about being unable to locate other volunteers after completing the distribution. We were also anxious when we ran out of vouchers for needy families while we waited for more to arrive.

If we had extra claim vouchers, we took motorcycle taxis to nearby villages to continue distributing.

That was my first time riding a motorcycle taxi. I held the claim vouchers in one hand. In the other, I gripped the passenger grab handle and my Tzu Chi bag. That motorcycle ride was an unforgettable experience.

During the distribution period, something else left a deep impression on me. Brother Franky was putting a lot of effort into helping with the distributions. One day, his father, Mr. Widjaja, said to me that Franky was dedicating so much time to the distributions that his mother and wife were unhappy, as it reduced his time with them. I promptly went to Franky's office and requested that he not participate in the distribution events any longer. To my surprise, he responded, "Please

**Tzu Chi Hospital Indonesia was officially inaugurated in June 2023.**

ANAND YAHYA



tell my dad that I show up in the office every morning at eight and work into the night. It can be stressful. While my siblings have hobbies like golf, fitness, and surfing [to help them deal with their work pressure], I don't. My only passion lies with Tzu Chi." When I conveyed this message, Mr. Widjaja suddenly adopted a very gentle tone and said, "Forget about it then. Let him be."

### The 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami

In 2004, the Indian Ocean tsunami wreaked havoc in southeast Asia, including in Aceh Province, Indonesia, resulting in over 200,000 fatalities. Brother Sugianto and his family were in Shanghai, China, at the time of the tragedy, December 26. When he learned about the disaster, he hastily returned to Jakarta. On the 28th, he boarded a chartered flight with several other volunteers, transporting relief supplies to the disaster area. Witnessing the enormity of the catastrophe and the people at the airport, barefoot and scrambling to board planes, Sugianto was struck by life's impermanence. He reflected on how, in the face of death, we can take nothing but our karma.

Fear initially gripped me as I headed to Aceh for relief efforts. Images from TV reports—the countless lives lost, the families shattered—haunted my thoughts. Despite my inner turmoil, I pressed on. Once in the disaster zone, I sensed the somber atmosphere but also witnessed the courageous dedication of fellow Tzu Chi volunteers. Sister Qiu-lan, for instance, served as a culinary volunteer there for three months. Several male volunteers not only engaged in disaster relief but also assisted in the handling of deceased bodies, embodying the true spirit of compassion.

This calamity was a massive tragedy of our time, prompting Tzu Chi to construct 2,700 housing units in Aceh for those rendered homeless by the disaster. We are grateful for Brother Sugianto's communication with the local governments during our aid efforts and to Brother Franky for coordinat-

ing the storage and transportation of thousands of tons of relief supplies. Our appreciation also goes to Master Cheng Yen, and to the global Tzu Chi community for their street fundraising efforts, which contributed to this collective project.

### The COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic brought about movement restrictions and impacted the world for more than two years. Despite the challenges caused by the outbreak, Tzu Chi Indonesia formed good affinities with many people during this time. For instance, we donated a substantial amount of protective clothing, rapid test kits, medications, and more to medical facilities nationwide. Even the remote Nias Island received assistance. Tzu Chi's outreach was made possible through the unity and cooperation of all volunteers in Indonesia. We thank Sister Su-mei for her unwavering dedication in overseeing our operations during this period.

On June 14, 2023, President Joko Widodo graced the inauguration ceremony of Tzu Chi Hospital Indonesia. This occasion filled us all with joy and honor. Tzu Chi hospitals in Indonesia stand as the only medical institutions in the country with volunteers assisting patients and their families. We sincerely invite more people to join us as hospital volunteers. We not only contribute to the well-being of others within the hospital setting, but also deepen our understanding of the fundamental aspects of the human experience—birth, aging, illness, and death.

Over the past 30 years, those of us with Tzu Chi Indonesia have experienced much, gaining deep insight into the suffering as taught by the Buddha. Through learning to give and care for others, we have grown and enriched our lives with greater meaning. I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to cultivate myself within Tzu Chi. I pledge to follow the Bodhisattva Path life after life. ❀



### Profile of Jia Wen-yu

- Born in 1957. Became the first certified Tzu Chi volunteer in Indonesia in 1995.
- Joined the Sinar Mas Group in 1992. Introduced Tzu Chi to Mr. Eka Tjipta Widjaja, the founder of the Group, who, in turn, introduced the charity foundation to many other entrepreneurs in Indonesia.

# A Temporary Kitchen in the Snow

## Japan's Noto Earthquake

**By Xu Li-xiang, CEO of Tzu Chi Japan**

Abridged and translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Photos courtesy of Tzu Chi Japan

*Tzu Chi volunteers, overcoming challenging conditions, initiated a hot meal service in an area that was hit hard following a powerful earthquake on the Noto Peninsula in western Japan.*

New Year celebrations in Japan are typically characterized by bustling crowds gathering at temples for their first shrine visits of the year, coupled with heartwarming reunions as city dwellers return to their hometowns to be with their parents or friends. But this year began on a somber note. At 4:10 p.m. on the first day of the year, a shallow, magnitude-7.6 earthquake rocked the Noto Peninsula in Ishikawa Prefecture, killing 240 people and causing extensive damage. The disaster cast a pall over what was supposed to be a joyous time.

Tremors from the massive earthquake were even felt by us in Tokyo, where the shaking measured magnitude 3. As tsunami warnings were issued, anxiety gripped everyone's hearts. In that tense moment, Master Cheng Yen's compassionate voice came through the phone, asking if we Tzu Chi volunteers in Japan were safe and sound.

Surrounded by the Sea of Japan, the picturesque Noto Peninsula is renowned for its lacquerware and seafood, but was largely unfamiliar to me and most other Tzu Chi volunteers in Japan. Despite our lack of knowledge of the area, we initiated a hot meal service there after the quake on January 13, setting up our first distribution point

at the Sawayaka Community Center Pluto in the town of Anamizu. The community center had been repurposed as a shelter for survivors following the quake. Another group had already commenced meal distributions at the shelter, but they graciously relinquished their lunchtime slots to Tzu Chi. They were happy about this arrangement because they were short on volunteers themselves—just two individuals responsible for preparing a thousand meals each day.

Our volunteers worked in a temporary kitchen, sheltered by blue plastic sheets attached to the outer walls of the shelter. They had to endure all kinds of weather conditions in such a makeshift setup. The majority of evacuees at the community center were elderly, so their needs required special attention. For example, vegetables were cut into easily consumed, uniform sizes and dishes were cooked to a softer texture. The volunteers also prioritized the nutritional value of the food they prepared, and offered menu items including fiber-rich vegetables and protein-packed tofu dishes. Mrs. Arita, one of the meal recipients, expressed surprise that her mouth ulcers healed after consuming our meals. This revelation—perhaps demonstrating the





**Volunteers prepare meals for hundreds of people in a makeshift setup at the Sawayaka Community Center Pluto.**

ZHOU LI-ZHEN



**With temperatures at zero degrees Celsius in the early morning, the liquefied petroleum gas used for cooking froze, despite efforts to protect it with a blanket.**

GAO JUN-ZHE

power of vegetarian food—brought immense joy to the volunteers.

Our volunteers were initially nervous about how their food would be received, but their meals on the first day were met with gratitude and praise from the recipients. That day, Dr. Shimanaka Koshi, the superintendent of Anamizu General Hospital, visited our team. He came to us at the recommendation of Dr. Chen Wen-bi (陳文筆), a practicing physician in Ishikawa Prefecture and the chairman of the Ishikawa-Taiwan Exchange Promotion Association. The superintendent asked if we could expand our meal service to provide hot meals for his hospital staff, residents taking shelter at the town hall, and rescue teams from out of town. He explained that they had mainly been consuming instant noodles and rice balls since the earthquake, lacking access to hot meals. We agreed to his request without hesitation, thus adding another distribution point to our mission.

But our work was not all smooth sailing. On the second day, what seemed like a straightforward task—cooking rice—soon turned into a nightmare. Snow fell on that day, which presented the volunteers with an unexpected challenge: the





liquefied gas in the cylinder froze, leaving their rice uncooked.

Despite their rich experience in cooking for disaster victims, the undercooked rice left the volunteers immensely frustrated. Thankfully, local volunteers promptly provided udon noodles, resolving the predicament. When the same issue arose on the third day, the shelter supplied an electric rice cooker to help.

Our volunteers worked in relay teams, each group serving for five days before being relieved by a fresh team of volunteers. During the third team's volunteer period, the electric rice cooker broke. A local group of volunteers showed the team how to cook rice using gas, but they were unfamiliar with the method and found it challenging. However, after learning the ropes, everyone rejoiced at acquiring another cooking skill.

### **Seizing opportunities to serve**

After the earthquake, we managed to promptly provide services in the affected zone, despite the Japanese government politely declining international assistance and not yet accepting volunteer groups from other prefectures to serve in the disas-

**Volunteers served mapo tofu, a spicy Chinese dish, at Anamizu General Hospital on January 22, attracting many people to line up for meals.**

ter area. This was possible due to the support we received from various sectors and our extensive experience in preparing hot meals for disaster victims and the homeless over the years. However, the most crucial factor was the guidance from Master Cheng Yen, who deeply empathized with the suffering of the quake survivors. She motivated us to actively seek opportunities to serve in the disaster area. Our goal was simple: to provide warm, nutritious meals to the needy as soon as possible.

The day before our volunteers were set to depart for the disaster area to begin our meal service, our anxiety began to mount. Our accommodations had not yet been secured. We were advised to contact Dr. Chen Wen-bi and ask if he could check with the mayor of Nakanoto in Ishikawa Prefecture for help. Remarkably, within a mere ten minutes, accommodations were sorted out. Dr. Chen even joined us for the first day of our hot meal distribution.

Volunteers were put up in a century-old traditional Japanese house in Nakanoto. They found the local chilly conditions challenging, despite being from Tokyo, where occasional snowy weather was experienced. There was heating available at night, but it proved insufficient. For two consecutive nights, most of the volunteers huddled in their sleeping bags but still couldn't shake off the cold enough to sleep. On the third day, the mayor sent emergency supplies for cold weather, including blankets. A volunteer also shared her experiences, saying that wearing warm down jackets to bed helped one sleep in the cold nights. Only then did the volunteers begin to sleep better.

The fact that we were staying in Nakanoto, despite being 50 kilometers (30 miles) from Anamizu, where our meal service was provided, provided a solution to the water shortage problem for cooking hot meals in the disaster area. Each night, volunteers filled water bags and washed and sliced vegetables at their accommodation, readying them to be transported to Anamizu the following day for cooking. The rhythmic sound of chopping echoed as volunteers prepared ingredients for over 500 servings of hot meals. They sometimes worked past midnight to meet menu

requirements, even though they needed to set out by six in the morning. Their faces radiated with the joy of serving others, even with multiple pain relief patches on their bodies.

A videoconference on our earthquake relief efforts was held every day at 8:30 p.m. The conference often clashed with the volunteers' vegetable chopping session. Worried they wouldn't finish chopping in time, volunteers found themselves multitasking, peeling burdock roots, cutting potatoes, and shredding cabbage while participating in the meeting. Among other matters, volunteers shared during the meeting heartwarming moments from the day's meal distributions, as well as tense instances where they worked to ensure everything was ready on schedule. Laughter filled the room, dispelling their fatigue and instilling courage for the unknown of the following day.

As teams rotated on the front lines, volunteers who couldn't go to the disaster area continued Tzu Chi Japan's regular activities, such as distributing food to the homeless, operating the Great Love Kitchen that served the disadvantaged, and providing care for needy households. Volunteers also hit the streets to raise funds to aid earthquake victims in Ishinomaki, located in Miyagi

## Tzu Chi's Relief Work Following Japan's Noto Earthquake

**A magnitude 7.6 earthquake rocked the Noto Peninsula in western Japan on New Year's Day 2024, resulting in the loss of 240 lives and severely damaging or destroying tens of thousands of homes. Tzu Chi has since launched two phases of aid work to help survivors, providing hot meals and offering work relief opportunities.**

### ● Phase One

**Duration: 17 days, from January 13 to 29**

**Locations: Anamizu General Hospital and the Sawayaka Community Center Pluto in Ishikawa Prefecture**

**Meal Recipients: evacuees, medical personnel at Anamizu Hospital, disaster relief or medical workers from various regions**

**Menu: over 20 varieties of dishes including eight-treasure rice, milk-stewed vegetables, Japanese-style borscht rice, sukiyaki rice,**

**tomato mapo tofu, and others**

**Quantity: 7,129 servings**

**Mobilization: Each team of volunteers worked for five days, to be relieved by another team at the end of the five days. Four teams worked in succession, totaling 273 shifts.**

### ● Phase Two

**Duration: commencing from February 16**

**Location: Anamizu General Hospital**

**Notable Events:**

- 1. Initiation of Tzu Chi's first work relief program in Japan, providing employment opportunities for unemployed quake survivors by hiring them to assist in cooking, ensuring they receive assistance with dignity**
- 2. Opening of a Tzu Chi coffee station, providing coffee, hot tea, and hot cocoa for medical staff, patients, families, and evacuees**

In late January, the quake-affected area was hit by days of heavy snowfall. Volunteers set out early in the morning to cook and serve hot meals for quake victims. While driving, they had to be cautious to avoid slipping on the snowy roads.

The distance between Nakanoto, where volunteers were staying, and Anamizu, where they served hot meals, is about 50 kilometers. Their daily schedule started with traffic congestion because road damage had restricted traffic to single lanes, and there were many rescue and relief vehicles on the road.

ZHOU LI-ZHEN



Prefecture, Shinjuku, located in Tokyo, Osaka, and other places.

### Returning

Our first phase of hot meal distributions ended on January 29. On February 16, volunteers returned to Anamizu Hospital to commence another phase of meal service. They launched Tzu Chi's first work relief program in Japan at the same time by inviting four unemployed earthquake survivors to assist in meal preparation. Meals that day were served promptly at noon. A long queue had formed by the time they started. Representatives from various departments, carrying large food trays, eagerly awaited their meals while expressing joy at the sight of Tzu Chi volunteers once again. The hospital generously provided an unused break room in which volunteers could prepare hot beverages. Patients awaiting

consultations and hospital staff who benefited from Tzu Chi's service left message after message expressing gratitude for the hot drinks, meals, and the smiles. All of the positive feedback brought joy to the volunteers.

In January, following the earthquake, Master Cheng Yen frequently communicated with us volunteers in Japan, reminding us to adhere to government regulations while seizing opportunities to assist earthquake victims. Despite the bitter cold in the disaster area, every volunteer's heart remained warm, guided by the Master's compassion, as they did their best to ease the difficult time for those affected by the disaster. ❁❁

**Volunteers staying behind at Tzu Chi's Tokyo office prepare donation boxes and posters for street fundraising.**

LIN ZHEN-ZI



# Kindness in Action

By Zhang Ling-hui

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Graphic by Su Fang-pei

“**M**om, now that I’m 18, can I sign up for stem cell donation?” my daughter eagerly asked. “I really want to do this as soon as possible.”

Shortly afterwards, to fulfill my daughter’s wish, we visited a Jing Si Books & Café store in Changhua, central Taiwan, for a Tzu Chi blood stem cell registration drive. Before the required blood draw, I informed the nurse, “My daughter’s veins are superficial and hard to access. Usually, she has to have blood drawn from the back of her hand.”

“No problem!” replied the nurse. “Let’s take a look.” After a couple of attempts, however, the blood still refused to come out. The nurse’s forehead started to sweat. “I’m really sorry!” the nurse said. “Should we let your daughter rest for a while?”

On-site volunteers generously offered us hot tea, nut tarts, and biscuits. We felt a bit shy facing such hospitality, but their warmth was comforting. “If our next attempt still doesn’t work, we’ll take a break. No pressure,” reassured the nurse.

“Don’t be disheartened,” I said to the nurse. “I’m sure your next attempt will work. You can use a butterfly needle [also known as a scalp vein set]. My daughter has been in the hospital before, and that’s how they successfully drew blood from her at that time.”

But as before, the next attempt to draw blood was not successful. Seeing the somewhat disheartened nurse, I quickly reassured her, “The issue is with my daughter, not you. Trust me, the next try will work!”



The air felt tense. To lighten the mood, I tried to lift everyone’s spirits by saying: “Good things take time. Good things take time.” Finally, amid applause, the next attempt was successful, and my daughter fulfilled her 18-year-old wish to sign up to donate stem cells.

Leaving the event venue, my daughter asked me to take a photo of her to remember this brave moment. On our car ride back home, I shared with her that compared with patients struggling to survive, the pain she endured wasn’t much. “Indeed!” my daughter said. “But it certainly wasn’t a walk in the park collecting blood from me. The nurse had a hard time! She was so nervous.”

We are all born with innate kindness, but kindness needs action and support. My daughter’s compassionate heart has our wholehearted support, and we look forward to finding a matching recipient soon. We are all committed to saving lives! ❀



# *Breaking the Chains of Blindness*

**By Huang Xiao-zhe and Cai Yu-xuan**

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Photos by Huang Xiao-zhe

**A**t first glance, the man in the photo here, the protagonist of this story, appears to be completely ordinary. It's unlikely anyone can tell that he is blind. Similarly, our subject probably never imagined that his journey with blindness would evolve into the most extraordinary chapter of his life.

Shen Wen-nan (沈文楠), 69, lives in Xinhua District, Tainan, southern Taiwan. Eighteen years ago, while employed as a maintenance worker in a textile factory, he began to notice a gradual decline in his ability to distinguish fabrics of different colors. Following a medical examination, he received a diagnosis of retinitis pigmentosa, a genetic condition leading to progressive vision loss. His vision deteriorated to the extent that he was compelled to retire in his early 50s. He sought help everywhere in pursuit of a solution to his diminishing sight, but was ultimately disappointed by the final verdict: there was no cure for his condition. The news extinguished the faintest glimmer of hope to which he had been clinging.

Shen's eyesight plummeted to near-total blindness in just a few years, separating him forever from the vibrant tapestry of the external world. But what commands admiration is his refusal to be defeated. He relearned life skills to adjust to a new life in the dark, and even sought ways to contribute to charitable causes despite his visual limitations. Despite the absence of sight, he invited light into the window of his soul. In this brave stance, he redefined the value of his life and broke free from the constraints of his visual limitations.



### **Independence in darkness**

Shen lives by himself, but a caregiver visits three times a week to help with cleaning and shopping. Though visually impaired, his home remains remarkably tidy; everything has a designated place, which helps him in locating items. He independently manages all aspects of his meals—from preparing ingredients to cooking and washing dishes—with an ease and nimbleness that belie the challenges of his situation.

We were quick to notice during our first visit to Shen's home that all the lights were off. Accustomed to well-lit spaces, we felt a sense of unease and discomfort in the absence of light. For Shen, however, such darkness is a daily reality. Instead of light, he relies on the tactile sense of his hands to navigate his home and the life experience he has accumulated to identify objects.

Shen talked about the time right after losing his vision, during which his daily life was significantly impacted. Moving around, completing simple household chores, and preparing his meals were very difficult. Fortunately, with help from Tainan City's Social Affairs Bureau and a referral to the Eden Social Welfare Foundation, he learned valuable life skills and self-care techniques at the Center for the Rehabilitation of the Visually Impaired, thus gradually regaining independence.





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九做環保消災禍 十做環保





### **Thoughtful companionship**

Chen Ting-ren (陳廷任) is a Tzu Chi volunteer residing in Xinhua District, where Shen's home is located. He became a vital presence in Shen's life after he lost his sight.

Though it was not yet seven a.m. on this particular day, Chen had already arrived at Shen's home in a car to take him to the Tzu Chi Xinhua Recycling Station for volunteering. Upon arrival, Chen promptly approached Shen, allowed him to hold onto his arm, and guided him into the car. The same considerate assistance was repeated when they reached the recycling station. Chen's actions were touching—he was like a caring guardian by Shen's side.

Chen shared the story of how he began supporting Shen. Upon receiving a phone call about Shen's situation, he visited and discovered that Shen had become a widower early in life and had two married daughters who rarely returned home. Observing Shen living alone and coping with vision loss, Chen empathized with him, contemplating how challenging his situation must be. Recognizing that Shen needed companionship, he took the initiative to provide support. Shen initially lacked the confidence to become a recycling volunteer because of his vision challenges, but received encouragement and patient guidance from Chen. With Chen's assistance, he embraced volunteering, rediscovering a sense of purpose in life and regaining his self-worth.





### Unhindered by blindness

Chen led Shen to the sorting area upon arriving at the Xinhua Recycling Station. The two of them then proceeded to carry out their respective tasks. Chen would occasionally check in with Shen, appearing by his side to ensure there were no issues related to sorting. We noted during our observations that Shen wore only one glove while sorting recyclables, on his left hand, leaving his right hand uncovered. The reason became clear upon closer scrutiny: due to his visual impairment, he relied on the sense of touch in his right hand to identify materials, sometimes using that hand to knock on items for identification. Surprisingly, despite his blindness and the myriad types of recyclables, he accurately classified over 95 percent of what passed through his hands, and with impressive speed too. Only a few peculiar items required further confirmation by another volunteer.

Shen expressed gratitude for the attention and consideration shown by fellow volunteers while he serves at the recycling station. They take special care to prevent hazardous foreign objects, such as broken glass or nails, from falling into the piles of recycling awaiting sorting, thereby minimizing the risk of harm to him. They assist him during breaks in using the restroom and bring him snacks. They chat and laugh together, creating a familial atmosphere that makes him feel warm and cared for. In the collective efforts and kindness surrounding him, he finds a supportive community that empowers him to contribute meaningfully.



## Important people in his life

The two photos in this section of the article exude the beauty of contented happiness. In one, Shen is accompanied by his second daughter and granddaughter. It was a rare occasion that the mother and daughter returned from Japan to reunite with Shen. Although their time together was brief, it brought a profound sense of familial joy to him. The other photo captures Shen and Chen, who had just returned to Shen's home after volunteering at the recycling station. Despite being covered in sweat, they radiated joy and satisfaction. The former photo illustrates the deep bond of blood relations, while the latter demonstrates a friendship between two men who are like brothers to each other.

Particularly heartwarming was the spontaneous interaction between the two men. As they prepared for the photo, they naturally held hands, fingers intertwined, revealing a close emotional connection and conveying unspoken gratitude and emotion towards each other. Chen never quantified his contributions to Shen; instead, he was grateful for the opportunity Shen gave him to contribute. Shen, in turn, was filled with a deep sense of appreciation towards Chen. "He's had such an important, positive impact on my life," he said of Chen. "We've known each other for seven years now, and he has been there for me along the way, instrumental in helping me unlock the positive potentials of life after the loss of my eyesight. Thanks to him, I've gained a new lease of life." ❖



A photograph of a hospital room. In the foreground, a person's hand is being held gently. In the background, a patient is lying in a hospital bed with a pink blanket. An IV drip is visible on a stand to the right. The room has white curtains and a wooden floor.

# Aromatherapy's Gentle Touch in Hospice Care

**By Hong Jing-jing**

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Photos by Huang Xiao-zhe

*Aromatherapy volunteer Li Yu-jin uses essential oils and massages to ease the anxiety of terminal patients and provide them with a sense of care and comfort.*





Mrs. A had spent six days in the palliative care ward at Taichung Tzu Chi Hospital in central Taiwan. Cancer cells had metastasized to her brain, lungs, liver, and abdominal cavity, resulting in symptoms of pain, shortness of breath, nausea, and vomiting. Her emotions were unsettled, characterized by fear, depression, and irritability. She had also started experiencing delirium, confusion, loud outbursts, and difficulty sleeping. Her husband, who was by her side as her caregiver, was also grappling with sleeplessness due to worry and anxiety.

Aromatherapy volunteer Li Yu-jin (李玉錦) entered Mrs. A's room with a blend of essential oils. Greeting the patient, she said, "I'll give you a massage; it'll be very soothing. Don't be afraid!" In just over ten minutes, Mrs. A peacefully fell asleep. Li continued to massage her swollen and stiff lower limbs.

Through the calming aroma of essential oils and comforting massages, Li communicates abundant love and warmth to patients, alleviating their fear and anxiety and providing compassionate support on their final journey. She shared, "Many people ask me, 'Aren't you afraid to provide aromatherapy massages for terminally ill patients?' I tell them, 'You wouldn't be afraid of your own family member in that situation, right? I'm not afraid because I treat every patient as my own family.'"

She explained that she had been volunteering in hospice care for 20 years, and the essential oils she used came from the kindness of the public's

**Li Yu-jin (right) examines the records of patients who are open to aromatherapy before prescribing individualized essential oil formulas for them.**



donations. “Everyone contributes what they can to support the patients,” she said. Upon hearing this, Mrs. A’s husband immediately expressed his desire to donate as well.

### Magical fingers

Li was introduced to the world of essential oils at the age of 33. While attending classes offered by an aromatherapy association, she discovered that essential oils were already widely used in clinical settings overseas, effectively relieving various discomforts. Inspired, she thought, “Essential oils are so beneficial; I can use them to help those in need.”

At first, Li joined instructors from the aromatherapy association in offering services to hospital palliative care wards. Now, she regularly volunteers every Wednesday at China Medical University Hospital in central Taiwan and every other Wednesday at Taichung Tzu Chi Hospital. She seldom takes a day off, doing so only when she has exams or needs to travel abroad.

Li encountered Ms. B, a patient at Taichung Tzu Chi Hospital. “I never expected massages to be this effective,” Ms. B said over and over. A radiant smile had graced her face since the massage session provided by Li began, a stark contrast to the fact that she was a critically ill patient with salivary gland cancer that had spread to her lungs. When she talked, she opened up and seemed to momentarily forget about her illness. “I sell pineapples and green foxtail at the market—all grown by my family! I also sell ginger.”

She continued, “Some say that once you check into a palliative care ward, there’s no hope or that it’s time to settle affairs. But I still hold onto a glimmer of hope. Taking medication and injections every day, my wish is to return home one day.”

Huang Mei-ling (黃美玲), the head nurse of the palliative care ward at Taichung Tzu Chi Hospital, said that a common characteristic of end-stage cancer patients is neglecting self-care. Massage can promote relaxation and comfort, allowing them to feel loved and cared for. “Li’s fingers work wonders,” Huang added. “She can sense the issues or emotions of a patient. The happy smile on many patients she has massaged shows the profound enjoyment they experienced. Some even open up emotionally, especially breast cancer patients, who release many hidden emotions.”

Liu Jia-yi (劉嘉儀), another aromatherapy volunteer, shared that she joined in the services after discovering a severe shortage of such volunteers while she was serving at the information desk of



**An aromatherapy volunteer prepares essential oil blends based on formulas prescribed by Li Yu-jin.**

China Medical University Hospital five or six years ago. The hospital had been seeking aromatherapy volunteers for its palliative care unit, but without much success. For a long time, Li Yu-jin was the only volunteer holding an aromatherapist certificate. Liu decided to sign up and began learning alongside Li.

Liu reflected on her initial shock and fear when seeing patients with deformed facial features and ulcerated lesions due to head and neck cancers. She said, “Li remained calm, so I gradually overcame my fear by following her lead.”

As it happens, Liu’s mother fell victim to terminal cancer too. It was only four short months from her diagnosis to her passing. During that time, severe abdominal fluid retention prevented her from walking. Liu asked Li to create an essential oil formula for her mom and personally massaged her every day. She went on, “I never imag-



ined that one day I would be helping my own mother with my skills as an aromatherapy volunteer.”

One day, Li said to Liu, “I want to see your mother.” Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, Li visited Liu’s mother, providing a massage and chatting with her. Liu recalled her mom’s reaction to Li’s visit. “My mom was very happy that day. It had been a long time since I saw her smile. She said it felt so good and praised Li, saying that she massaged better than I did!”

### **Expressing love through touch**

When visiting a hospital ward, Li Yu-jin pays special attention to patients without family by them to provide care. On one occasion, she met an elderly woman who had to skip bathing because she had no one to help her. Despite the challenging sanitary conditions the woman presented, Li gave the woman full-body massages. She kept going even when she kneaded out small particles of grime during the process.

The elderly woman tearfully confided, “My family avoids me, fearing I’ll infect them. Yet, you help me without wearing gloves; you touch me directly.” Li typically refrains from using gloves during massages, emphasizing, “I can simply wash my hands afterward. The essence of a massage is the comforting feeling of touch; I only wear gloves if there are lesions on my hands.”

While family members may not be able to share a patient’s physical pain, helping them learn to express their care through touch remains profoundly meaningful. “Upon entering a room,” Li said, “I always inquire, ‘What’s your relationship with the patient?’ If they are a son or daughter, I say, ‘Come, let’s repay your parent’s kindness. I’ll teach you how to massage.’”

Li has bid farewell to over a thousand patients over the past two decades. She maintains her composure when confronting death. For example, recently she was helping a patient who was struggling to breathe. Li realized the patient didn’t have much time left, and so told the patient’s daughter, “I’ll massage half, and you can do the other half.” The patient passed away shortly after the massage. Li calmly extended her blessings, remarking, “For him, in such pain, passing away

**Li Yu-jin, a dedicated aromatherapy volunteer, plans to continue in her role for as long as she has the physical strength, even into old age.**

was a relief. Therefore, I calmly wished him to rest in peace.”

A man in his 40s, battling connective tissue cancer, had developed tumors, large and small, on his thighs. Because the man’s tumors gave off a foul odor, other patients avoided sharing a room with him, leading to his confinement in a single room. Clearly depressed, he intentionally covered himself with a blanket to contain the smell and avoided interactions with others.

Wearing two masks with essential oil dropped onto them, Li entered the man’s room composedly. She aimed to sterilize and reduce inflammation of his legs using a blend of citrus oils, cedarwood, lavender, and lemon. Due to her efforts, the unpleasant odor in the room subsided after a week. “This young man continued to stay silent,” she said, “but he no longer hid beneath his blanket and shunned others. Knowing that aromatherapy can help people like this brings the greatest comfort to me.”

Simultaneously managing her aromatherapy practice, preparing for professional exams, and volunteering is no easy task. Yet, Li’s initial aspi-

rations and unwavering dedication fuel her passion, driving her continuous efforts. Whenever fatigue sets in and she feels on the brink of being unable to carry on, she reflects on her initial motivation. “Being an aromatherapy volunteer is my personal aspiration. If I quit, who will create essential oil formulas for the patients? Many patients say, ‘We’ve been waiting for you; why haven’t you come?’ Just thinking about this instantly renews my energy.”

Li Yu-jin and her three fellow aromatherapy volunteers, all in their 50s, are eager to involve the younger generation. She said, “I can’t predict how long I can keep going. I’m just doing my best now, serving patients the best I can and hoping to teach my skills and knowledge to more people. I want to continue this journey into old age. I hope I have the physical strength.”

**Li Yu-jin wears gloves only when her hands have wounds. She hopes to use the soothing touch of essential oil massage to transmit positive, loving energy to patients.**



# Relief Reaches Victims of Hurricane Otis in Mexico

Information provided by Tzu Chi USA

Compiled and translated by Wu Hsiao-ting



PHOTO BY HÉCTOR MUNIENTE

# MEXICO



In late October 2023, Category 5 Hurricane Otis slammed into Acapulco, a tourist destination in southern Mexico, leaving widespread devastation in its wake and taking at least 52 lives. In November, Tzu Chi volunteers assessed damage in two remote, impoverished areas and compiled lists of potential aid recipients. They were aided by local residents and sisters of the Consecrated Sisters of the Most Holy Savior.

A distribution effort was subsequently launched in early 2024. From January 5 to 7, Tzu Chi volunteers from the United States, Ecuador, Spain, and Argentina joined local volunteers in distributing cash cards to affected households. “Our hearts are with the hurricane victims,” said Wang Peiwen (王佩文), a volunteer from Argentina. “They have our utmost support. We want affected families to understand that what we offer is not just material aid but also emotional support. They are not alone.”

Over 3,800 households benefited from the distributions, held at the Church of Our Lady of Fatima (Parroquia Nuestra Señora de Fátima). The cash cards allowed recipients to purchase essential items from partner stores, sufficient to sustain them for two months. Socorro Pérez Flores, an aid recipient, expressed deep gratitude for the assistance received from Tzu Chi. “To Master [Cheng Yen]—we’ll keep her here in our hearts,” she said with emotion. ❦

# New Homes, Better Lives

**Text and photos by Chen Yi-qing**

Edited and translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

A group of people walked through fields carrying mattresses and buckets and arrived at new houses built of bricks and cement in Metuchira, Sofala Province, Mozambique. Upon reaching their new home, Avelina and one of her children patiently waited as Tzu Chi volunteers set up their new bed. Then they lay down to try out the bed, happy to no longer have to sleep on the floor.

Many crudely built, simple structures in rural Mozambique succumbed to the destructive force of Cyclone Idai in 2019. In response, Tzu Chi committed to rebuilding schools and constructing four housing villages for survivors in Sofala Province, one of the hardest-hit areas. Unfortunately, the reconstruction efforts were delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In late November 2023, the third batch of houses—nine in total—for the Metuchira Tzu Chi Great Love Village was finally handed over to beneficiary households. With gratitude in their hearts, the families moved into their new homes.

Avelina is from one of these families. She has six family members. The sturdy home Tzu Chi built for them gave her hope for the future. She knew it would provide far safer shelter than their old home, freeing them from worries about strong winds and relentless rain. ❁







# MOZAMBIQUE

# The JING SIA Illustrated APHORISMS

## The Buddha says:

With karma as the field and the mind as the seed,  
covered with the soil of ignorance,  
moistened by the rain of desires,  
and sprinkled with the water of egotism...  
This is how evil thoughts grow and produce fruits of confusion.



Many people ask me: "Master, how can I gain wisdom?" I just reply: "Don't fret over trifles! If you don't argue over every little thing, you won't have any worries. Without worries, you will naturally have wisdom."

If you can endure life's challenges, you will no longer argue over trifles. When your mind is no longer bothered by such worries, it will naturally shine with the glory of wisdom.



I often hear children being called "little bodhisattvas" and seniors being addressed as "elder bodhisattvas." Is it appropriate to refer to humans as bodhisattvas?

Dharma Master Cheng Yen: "Real bodhisattvas are not statues that people worship in temples. Only those who can save people are real bodhisattvas. To be a bodhisattva, you must become involved with people in order to experience their lives and understand their needs. This is how you learn to be a bodhisattva."

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

# 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

Tel: 54-11-48625770  
Fax: 54-11-43140252

## AUSTRALIA

### Brisbane

Tel: 61-7-32727938  
Fax: 61-7-32727283

### Gold Coast

Tel: 61-7-55717706  
Fax: 61-7-55717703

### Melbourne

Tel: 61-3-98971668  
Fax: 61-3-98974288

### Perth

Tel/Fax: 61-8-92278228

### Sydney

Tel: 61-2-98747666  
Fax: 61-2-98747611

## BRAZIL

Tel: 55-11-55394091  
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## BRUNEI

Tel/Fax: 673-3336779

## CANADA

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Tel: 1-780-4639788  
Fax: 1-780-4621799

### Montreal

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Fax: 1-514-2889152

### Toronto

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1-905-9471182  
Fax: 1-416-9002048

### Vancouver

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Fax: 1-604-2667659

## DOMINICAN REP.

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## EL SALVADOR

Tel/Fax: 1-503-7293905

## FRANCE

Tel: 33-1-45860312  
Fax: 33-1-45862540

## GERMANY

Tel: 49-40-388439  
Cell: 0049-152-2951-9571

## GREAT BRITAIN

Tel: 44-20-88699864  
Fax: 44-20-89334262

## GUATEMALA

Tel: 502-22327648  
Fax: 502-23675872

## HONG KONG

Tel: 852-28937166  
Fax: 852-28937478

## INDONESIA

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Fax: 62-21-50556699

## JAPAN

Tel: 81-3-32035651  
Fax: 81-3-32035674

## JORDAN

Tel/Fax: 962-6-5817305

## LESOTHO

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## MALAYSIA

### Ipoh

Tel: 60-5-5471013

### Kedah

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Fax: 60-4-7321013

### Kuala Lumpur

Tel: 60-3-62563800  
Fax: 60-3-62563801

### Melaka

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Fax: 60-6-2812796

### Penang

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Fax: 60-4-2261013

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## MOZAMBIQUE

Cell: 258-849530241

## MYANMAR

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## NETHERLANDS

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## NEW ZEALAND

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## PARAGUAY

Tel: 595-21-333818  
Fax: 595-21-310588

## PHILIPPINES

Tel/Fax: 63-2-7320001

## SINGAPORE

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## SOUTH AFRICA

### Cape Town

Tel: 27-21-9130934  
Fax: 27-21-9137057

### Durban

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Fax: 27-31-5644438

### Gauteng

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### Ladysmith

Tel: 27-36-6341333  
Fax: 27-36-6341261

### Port Elizabeth

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## SWEDEN

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## THAILAND

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Fax: 66-2-3281160

## TÜRKIYE

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Fax: 90-212-4225803

## UNITED STATES

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Fax: 1-909-4477948

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Fax: 1-512-9261373

### Boston

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Fax: 1-617-4314484

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Fax: 1-562-9261603

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Fax: 1-630-9609360

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### Detroit

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Fax: 1-713-9819008

### Indianapolis

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### Kansas

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### Las Vegas

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### Long Island

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Fax: 1-516-7460626

### Los Angeles Northwest

Tel: 1-818-7277689  
Fax: 1-818-7279272

### Los Angeles West

Tel: 1-310-4735188  
Fax: 1-310-4779518

### Madison

Tel: 1-608-2687692

### Miami

Tel: 1-954-5381172  
Fax: 1-317-6459907

### New Jersey

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Fax: 1-973-8579555

### New York

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Fax: 1-718-4602068

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Fax: 1-407-4793662

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Fax: 1-480-7777665

### Pittsburgh

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Fax: 1-412-5318341

### San Diego

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Fax: 1-858-5460573

### San Francisco

Tel: 1-415-6820566  
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### San Jose

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Fax: 1-408-9438420

### Seattle

Tel: 1-425-8227678  
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### St. Louis

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### Washington DC

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Fax: 1-703-7078607

## VIETNAM

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Fax: 84-28-38535055



*To worry every day about not having enough is to be a  
spiritually poor person.*  
—Dharma Master Cheng Yen

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