

慈濟

# Tzu Chi

Buddhism in Action

Flood Relief in  
Southern Taiwan

September 2024







**Volunteers deliver hot meals to a flooded area in Liuying, Tainan, southern Taiwan.**

SHEN SHU-XIANG



# Togetherness in Times of Crisis

Translated by Teresa Chang

The Buddha taught that everything in the world is impermanent and bound to change. Despite this, we often take our daily safety for granted, assuming each day will be the same as the last. Accustomed to a predictable life, we may find it challenging when impermanence suddenly disrupts our everyday existence. Therefore, we should stay vigilant while cherishing every moment with gratitude and appreciating the peace we often fail to notice.

In late July, Typhoon Gaemi unleashed an unusually heavy downpour on Taiwan. As I watched the weather reports, I felt anxious and worried. The typhoon brought significant rainfall, and although the damage wasn't extremely severe, many areas were still flooded and affected by the storm. Fortunately, Taiwan has many Tzu Chi volunteers, and these living bodhisattvas promptly took action to help.

In the immediate aftermath of Typhoon Gaemi, Tzu Chi volunteers in Kaohsiung delivered over 10,000 loaves of bread to affected households. More volunteers there and in other regions mobilized, preparing and delivering boxed meals to those in need. My heart was full of gratitude for their swift response, but when I learned that some of them were planning to provide care in remote mountainous areas, I was concerned and repeatedly reminded them to prioritize their own safety. The people they aimed to help might still be safe, but those rushing to assist could be putting themselves in unnecessary danger. Mountain roads could be cut off without warning if the rain was heavy, and conditions might be even worse after dark. While sustaining our caring spirit, we must also stay alert and adhere to the principles of safe assistance.

After the worst of the disaster had passed and the floods receded, our volunteers continued to care for affected families, especially those who were disadvantaged. They inspected homes for leaks and damage, arranging for necessary repairs. In some areas, the floodwaters had left so much mud that moving through it was difficult, especially for the elderly and disabled. Seeing the muck and water-damaged furniture was overwhelming for them. They were greatly relieved when Tzu Chi volunteers arrived to help with the cleanup.

Taiwan is prone to natural disasters such as typhoons. Looking back in history, Typhoon Thelma

struck Taiwan on July 25, 1977, the same day that Typhoon Gaemi hit this year. I personally witnessed concrete utility poles snapped in half and floodwaters submerging houses, leaving only the roofs visible. In 2006, another typhoon named Kaemi, which shares the same Chinese name as Typhoon Gaemi, also hit Taiwan in late July. However, regardless of the year, month, or day when a typhoon strikes, our volunteers always respond promptly. They distribute boxed meals, deliver necessities, provide emergency cash, and offer comfort to those affected, bringing peace of mind wherever they go. Each typhoon season is treated as a test, with our volunteers continuously assessing how to coordinate relief efforts and resources. Afterwards, they review their strengths and shortcomings, using the experience from each event to enhance and strengthen future responses.

Whenever an unfortunate event occurs, timely relief is crucial to alleviate the suffering of those affected. It is reassuring to see so many people quickly stepping in to provide care and support in areas struck by Typhoon Gaemi, reflecting the widespread compassion in many hearts. This kind of loving care not only benefits those who receive it but also those who give it. Those who give find deep joy and fulfillment in their altruistic actions.

I am grateful to the many real-life bodhisattvas who dedicate themselves to helping others. Good thoughts and deeds lead to the creation of good causes and conditions or good karma, thus resulting in blessings and good fortune. Our world is full of suffering, shaped by the forces of good and evil. When the power of good is strong, peace and health can flourish; if evil prevails, goodness diminishes, and suffering intensifies. We must strive to enhance our good deeds and reduce harmful actions, thereby nurturing harmony and goodness in the world.

Now that the typhoon has passed, I hope everyone continues to seize opportunities to help others, uphold a spirit of giving, and carry this dedication into the future. Let us persist in doing the good we are capable of, spreading love and kindness wherever we go. Don't think that your efforts are too small to make a difference. Every little bit counts, and when combined, they add up to something significant. When we all come together to do good, our collective effort becomes incredibly powerful. ❀



# Tzu Chi

Bimonthly

September 2024



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Even in disaster, hope persists. Discover how swift action and heartfelt care after Typhoon Gaemi helped those impacted recover, and the lessons we can learn.

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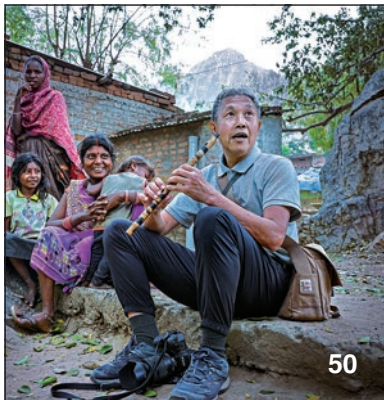




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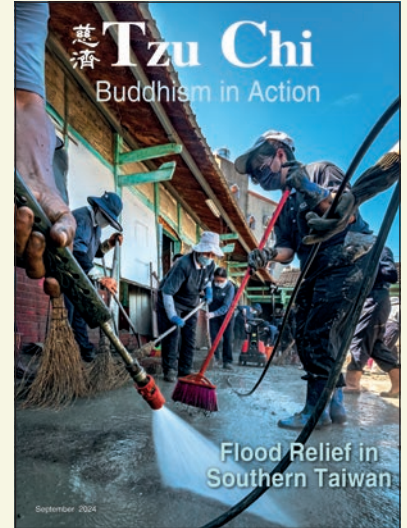
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The *Tzu Chi Bimonthly* welcomes contributions of personal experiences or reports of Tzu Chi activities. We also welcome letters to the editor containing personal comments or opinions on matters of interest in the Tzu Chi world. We reserve the right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

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# Tzu Chi Event Highlights

June 13 to Aug. 24, 2024

## Taiwan

- The National Health Research Institutes upgraded its equipment and donated nearly a hundred used laptops and desktops to Tzu Chi's recycled computer team in Hsinchu on June 13. The team will refurbish the devices and then distribute them to rural schools, low-income families, and disadvantaged groups. Since its formation in 2021, the Hsinchu computer team has distributed about a thousand computers, reaching recipients in Taiwan, Japan, Nepal, India, the Philippines, the United Kingdom, Argentina, and Mozambique.

## The Philippines

- Tzu Chi built a temporary housing village in Palo to help stabilize the lives of survivors after Super Typhoon Haiyan devastated the central Philippines in November 2013. Last year, on the 10th anniversary of the typhoon, Tzu Chi began the construction of permanent residences on the same site. The 1.5-hectare area now includes 60 housing units, a central kitchen, a vocational training center, and other facilities. The turnover ceremony on July 11 coincided with the start of a three-day free clinic that served 5,444 people from July 11 to July 13.


## Thailand

- The COVID-19 pandemic caused a significant decline in tourism, severely affecting taxi drivers. During their most challenging times, Tzu Chi provided much-needed assistance. In gratitude, 143 drivers turned their appreciation into action by joining volunteer training. One such session took place on July 31.






## Indonesia

- 
- Tzu Chi Indonesia, in collaboration with the Jakarta government, built permanent housing for the first time for the needy in Palmerah, West Jakarta. The project involved constructing a four-story building with nine units, each measuring 18 square meters (195 square feet). Construction began in October 2023, and the building was inaugurated on July 3 this year. Since 2006, Tzu Chi Indonesia's poverty relief program has built a total of 1,433 housing units nationwide.




## The United States

- 
- In the wake of Hurricane Beryl's impact on southeast Texas on July 8, Tzu Chi Texas, partnering with the Houston Food Bank, provided over 400,000 pounds of supplies to families in need between July 10 and August 24.
  - The Park Fire in Northern California began on July 24. By early August, it had grown to be the fourth-largest wildfire in California's history. Over four days—August 10, 11, 17, and 18—volunteers distributed emergency aid based on the extent of damage to homes as well as the size of the household. Cash cards valued between 300 and 1,200 U.S. dollars were provided to help survivors through their current difficulties.



## Brazil

- 
- Severe flooding hit the state of Rio Grande do Sul in April and May. In response, Tzu Chi donated supplies including rice, noodles, and flour in May. Volunteers revisited the disaster area in early August and are now focusing on aiding residents of São Leopoldo. Local clergy and community representatives are assisting in compiling recipient lists and organizing the distribution.



Charity



Medicine

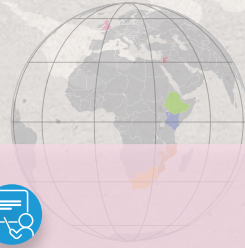


Education





## The United Kingdom



- Burrows Court, a residential building in Nottingham, houses refugee families from over 20 countries, including more than a hundred minors. Tzu Chi has been providing care for residents for three years. This year, in addition to distributing shopping vouchers, they are focusing on educational support. They handed out school supplies in late July, held an English workshop in August, and plan to distribute school uniforms in September.



## Jordan



- On June 28, Tzu Chi volunteers held a biannual dental clinic in Al Abasiyyah, benefiting 39 residents. For 20 years, Tzu Chi Jordan has cared for underserved Bedouin families in the area. They conduct two large-scale distributions each year and provide book bags and other school supplies to children in August before the school year starts. In addition, since November 2017, they have covered students' breakfast costs and classroom heating expenses. For years now, they have also offered scholarships to university students.



## Ethiopia



- Since 2022, amid the ongoing drought and conflict in Ethiopia, Tzu Chi has been collaborating with the local organization Kidmia Mahiber to provide food packages for displaced people, as well as meals and six months of medical assistance for vulnerable children under eight. From July to December this year, food packages have been or will be provided to 3,000 families affected by the conflict in the western region, along with daily meals for 1,350 children.





## Kenya



- Severe flooding affected 90 percent of the country during the rainy season, from March to May. Tzu Chi, in collaboration with three partners, is assisting 14,400 households. Love Binti International has already distributed aid to 3,300 households across three regions. The Camillians began providing free medical services in slum areas on August 3. The Red Cross is preparing to provide medical services, health education, water purification supplies, food, and other daily necessities, with recipient lists being compiled for 10,000 households.



## Mozambique



- In 2019, Mozambique was severely impacted by Cyclone Idai. After providing large-scale emergency relief, Tzu Chi initiated medium- and long-term rebuilding efforts. Unfortunately, their efforts were delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and other challenges. Tzu Chi is now constructing 13 primary and secondary schools in Beira, the capital of Sofala Province. A joint groundbreaking ceremony for these schools took place on June 14, and they are expected to be completed by 2025, with the capacity to serve 28,000 students. Additionally, Tzu Chi built 410 housing units in Metuchira, also in Sofala Province. The final group of these units was handed over on June 17. President Filipe Nyusi attended the event to witness the handover and offer his blessings.



## South Africa



- Volunteers carried out winter distributions in Primrose, Gauteng province, and KwaZulu-Natal province during June and July, which is winter in the Southern Hemisphere. They provided 2,550 ten-kilogram (22-pound) portions of rice from Taiwan, along with clothing and other supplies.





# Charting a Path to *Sustainability*

Tzu Chi and the SDGs

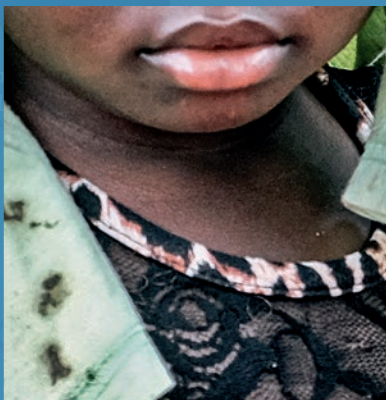
By Yeh Tzu-hao

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Photos by Huang Xiao-zhe and Hsiao Yiu-hwa

*For the past eight years, the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals have guided global efforts to address crises that threaten human survival. Tzu Chi's nearly 60 years of dedicated work align perfectly with these goals, tackling economic, social, and environmental issues to help chart a balanced path for current and future generations.*





AFFORDABLE  
CLEAN ENERGY

AFFORDABLE  
CLEAN ENERGY

AFFORDABLE  
CLEAN ENERGY

AFFORDABLE AND  
CLEAN ENERGY

8 DECENT WORK AND  
ECONOMIC GROWTH

9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION  
AND INFRASTRUCTURE

10 REDUCED  
INEQUALITIES

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES  
AND COMMUNITIES  
September 2024

12 RESPONSIBLE  
CONSUMPTION AND  
PRODUCTION



Sustainable development has become a major international issue in recent years. Many people are familiar with the colorful icons of the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and students who have taken environmental education courses might even be able to recite goals like “No Poverty,” “Zero Hunger,” and “Climate Action.” But what exactly does sustainable development mean? People often understand the concept differently, based on their own perspectives or concerns, leading to a variety of interpretations.

“In the past, discussions about sustainable development mostly focused on environmental protection. However, it encompasses much more,” said Professor Yeh Shin-cheng (葉欣誠) from the Graduate Institute of Sustainable Management and Environmental Education at National Taiwan Normal University, in northern Taiwan. For example, he emphasized that the United Nations has always highlighted the role of income in sustainable development, a perspective that differs from the common environmental focus in Taiwan: “Twenty years ago, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan highlighted that poverty is the greatest obstacle to sustainable development.”

Professor Yeh pointed out that as early as 1987,

the UN’s World Commission on Environment and Development (now the Brundtland Commission) defined sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” This concept includes not only environmental but also social and economic dimensions. He continued, “The UN’s approach to sustainable development, viewed from a global perspective, prioritizes basic survival issues like poverty, hunger, education, and health, with environmental concerns being a secondary focus. After all, people must first ensure their own survival before they can focus on environmental protection.”

To advance sustainable development, the United Nations introduced the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000 as the first 15-year plan aimed at addressing global challenges. The MDGs set eight objectives to be achieved by 2015, starting with the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger. That objective was followed by achieving universal primary education and

**The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals aim to ensure a better future for present and future generations.**

SU FANG-PEI





promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment. Ensuring environmental sustainability was the seventh goal.

The current Sustainable Development Goals, building upon the MDGs, were established by the UN in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Launched in 2016, the SDGs address a broader range of issues than the MDGs. While the MDGs primarily targeted developing countries, the SDGs apply to both developing and developed countries, with more detailed and comprehensive targets.

For instance, the SDGs include goals like ensuring affordable and clean energy, improving climate change adaptation, and promoting sustainable management of natural resources. The 17 main goals, covering social, economic, and environmental areas, are divided into 169 specific targets that countries have committed to achieving by 2030.

### Leave no one behind

While the first 12 of the 17 SDGs primarily address social and economic issues, true sustainability requires a holistic approach that integrates social, economic, and environmental dimensions. True sustainability can only be achieved if we also ensure that the Earth’s ecological environment does not collapse.

The hottest year on record was 2023, according to the *State of the Global Climate 2023* report from the World Meteorological Organization. Global temperatures are expected to increase in 2024. Human activities have pushed six out of nine planetary boundaries—such as global warming, biodiversity loss, land use changes, and the release of new chemical substances—beyond safe limits. Thus, addressing SDG 13 (Climate Action), SDG 14 (Life Below Water), and SDG 15 (Life on Land) is crucial.

To comply with international standards, many businesses and organizations have been striving to incorporate the SDGs into their operations and public welfare activities, taking measures such as conserving energy, reducing pollution and their carbon footprint, and improving labor welfare. However, achieving sustainable development involves not only addressing specific targets but also understanding and upholding the core principles of the SDGs: diversity, inclusion, and “leave no one behind.”

“People around the world differ in religion, ethnicity, skin color, language, politics, and culture,” Professor Yeh explained. “Discrimination is



## What are the differences between the SDGs and MDGs?

### MDGs: Millennium Development Goals

- Implemented from 2001 to 2015
- Designed by UN experts specifically for developing countries
- Consisted of 8 goals and 21 targets

### SDGs: Sustainable Development Goals

- Implemented from 2016 to 2030
- Established through a collective decision by representatives from 193 countries as action plans for humanity, the planet, and sustainability
- Apply to both developed and developing countries
- Consist of 17 goals and 169 targets



unacceptable; we cannot ignore or abandon someone just because they are different from us. This is the core spirit emphasized by the SDGs.”

The professor, who has long studied sustainability issues, recognizes Tzu Chi’s alignment with these principles through its efforts in alleviating poverty, providing disaster relief, and other endeavors. “Tzu Chi’s efforts tackle fundamental issues and promote inclusivity,” he said.

Of the 17 SDGs, the first 12 align closely with the essence and philosophy of Tzu Chi’s four major missions: charity, medicine, education, and culture. The environmental actions advocated by Tzu Chi volunteers to “coexist with the Earth,” such as recycling, vegetarianism, and simple living, correspond with the goals related to climate action.

The foundation also collaborates with partners to create safe living environments and support high-risk and vulnerable families in communities. For example, Tzu Chi collaborates with partners from various religions, including Catholicism and Islam, to assist international refugees. This results from believing in the equality of all beings and embodying the spirit of Great Love that transcends race, religion, and culture. This also aligns with the core values of the SDGs.

Yen Po-wen (顏博文), CEO of the Tzu Chi charity mission, uses the foundation’s contributions up to 2023 to illustrate the organization’s global impact. Tzu Chi has cared for over five million families across 40 countries and regions. The foundation has built more than 22,000 permanent homes in 18 countries and regions. The Tzu Chi

## The 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations



### No Poverty

End poverty in all its forms everywhere.



### Gender Equality

Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.



### Zero Hunger

End hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture.



### Clean Water and Sanitation

Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.



### Good Health and Well-Being

Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.



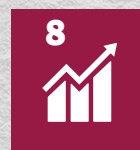
### Affordable and Clean Energy

Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all.



### Quality Education

Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.



### Decent Work and Economic Growth

Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all.



International Medical Association has conducted over 18,000 free clinic events in 58 countries, providing medical care and relief to more than four million people. In response to climate change and environmental disasters, Tzu Chi implements disaster reduction projects, promotes disaster prevention education, and establishes disaster relief information platforms to mitigate disaster impacts.

“Today, there is extensive discussion on the topic of sustainable development,” said Yen. “Tzu Chi’s missions comprehensively address all 17 of the United Nations’ sustainable development goals.” He believes that the foundation’s dedication to the common good explains why its environmental and social efforts are so closely aligned with the SDGs.

Starting with the September 2024 issue, *Tzu*

*Chi Bimonthly* will feature a series of articles titled “Tzu Chi and the SDGs.” The series will document how the foundation’s nearly 60 years of efforts have advanced and embodied the principles of sustainable development across five major areas: eliminating poverty and hunger, addressing climate change, caring for the elderly and children, practicing environmental education, and collaborating with global partners for sustainable development.

As Dharma Master Cheng Yen says, “Don’t worry how distant your journey is, as long as you find the way.” By evaluating our work in light of the SDGs’ ideals and vision and looking towards the future, we can gain a clearer perspective on our past accomplishments and chart the course for our ongoing and future efforts. ❊

	<p><b>9 Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure</b></p> <p>Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation.</p>
	<p><b>10 Reduced Inequalities</b></p> <p>Reduce inequality within and among countries.</p>
	<p><b>11 Sustainable Cities and Communities</b></p> <p>Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.</p>
	<p><b>12 Responsible Consumption and Production</b></p> <p>Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.</p>
	<p><b>13 Climate Action</b></p> <p>Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.</p>

	<p><b>14 Life Below Water</b></p> <p>Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development.</p>
	<p><b>15 Life on Land</b></p> <p>Protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, and halt biodiversity loss.</p>
	<p><b>16 Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions</b></p> <p>Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels.</p>
	<p><b>17 Partnerships for the Goals</b></p> <p>Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.</p>



Please refer to the United Nations SDGs website for information on the 17 goals, their targets, and additional related details.





# United for the Common Good

## An Interview With Debra Boudreaux, Convener of the Tzu Chi UN Task Force

**Compiled by *Tzu Chi Monthly* editorial staff**

Edited and translated by Wu Hsiao-ting and Steven Turner

Photos by Hsiao Yiu-hwa

*Senior Tzu Chi volunteer Debra Boudreaux is a key figure in advancing Tzu Chi's involvement with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. She has led the Tzu Chi UN Task Force for many years and has shared Tzu Chi's experiences and recommendations at international forums on issues including humanitarian aid, climate change, environmental protection, interreligious cooperation, and women's empowerment.*

*Boudreaux has lived in the United States for over 40 years and is now the CEO of Tzu Chi USA. She frequently represents Tzu Chi at UN meetings and has observed global leaders' shared concerns about our planet's sustainability. How does she see the connection between Tzu Chi's work and the SDGs in terms of relevance, alignment, and integration?*

**I**n 2015, the United Nations introduced the SDGs. How do these goals align with Tzu Chi's missions, and where can Tzu Chi enhance its efforts?

Tzu Chi approaches community charity work and other endeavors from the perspective of a religious charity organization, while the United Nations promotes sustainability through international frameworks and global guidelines. The UN established the 17 SDGs in September 2015 to address a wide range of global challenges, including climate change. The urgency of climate change, highlighted by the Paris Climate Agreement in December 2015, further underscored the need for these goals. The SDGs include 169 specific targets that provide actionable and measurable objectives to guide global efforts. Various countries and organizations have launched initiatives to advance these goals. Nearly 4,000 advocacy events have been held globally so far.

Tzu Chi drives community efforts using principles of priority, directness, respect, and practicality, while the United Nations operates on a broader scale with strategies, planning, and pro-

motion. Despite their different operational levels and approaches, both aim to achieve similar objectives. For example, Tzu Chi's charity work, cash-for-work programs, and the principle of "Eat until you're 80 percent full and use the savings from the remaining 20 percent to help those in need" align with SDG 1 (No Poverty). Tzu Chi's promotion of vegetarianism corresponds to SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 14 (Life Below Water), and SDG 15 (Life on Land). Tzu Chi's efforts in drilling wells and building toilets in Africa to improve sanitation align with SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation). Tzu Chi's promotion of a circular economy through its recycling and other environmental work corresponds to SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure). Finally, Tzu Chi's collaboration with various organizations to safeguard communities reflects SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

Tzu Chi's contributions to the SDGs vary in depth, breadth, and scope. What we need to work harder on is using data from our grassroots community work to illustrate our efforts in relation to the SDGs, leverage these goals to drive community growth and change, and establish a model that





The SDGs are interconnected. In Zimbabwe, a water well provides clean water, enhancing health and well-being while also addressing hunger.

COURTESY OF TINO CHU

Debra Boudreaux (曾慈慧, below center) assesses needs in a disaster area. She has been involved in international aid for many years and often collaborates with other NGOs to ensure timely delivery of assistance.







other organizations and countries can reference and learn from.

### Which aspects of Tzu Chi's work make the strongest impression on you in terms of alignment with the SDGs?

Our aid programs in Africa address several SDGs: SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), and SDG 2 (Zero Hunger). In Sierra Leone, for instance, our work started with Ebola relief in 2015. We provided instant rice, folding beds, eco-blankets, and advanced public health education. We then expanded our efforts to increase local food production, train midwives, offer women's health care, and support disaster response to frequent floods and fires. Additionally, we built a solar-powered well for St. Paul's School for the Blind to ensure access to safe water.

Despite having only a few volunteers in Sierra Leone, we've partnered with local organizations like Caritas Freetown, the Healey International Relief Foundation, and the Lanyi Foundation, as well as Taiwan's Agriculture and Food Agency and international bodies like the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). These collaborations have led to visible improvements in local commu-

nities. Though challenges remain, expanding educational opportunities and resources provide hope for significant change in this impoverished region.

**In 2010, Tzu Chi was granted special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and started participating in international conferences. Later, Tzu Chi received observer status with the United Nations Environment Programme and served as a co-chair of the United Nations Multi-Faith Advisory Council. From its origins as a charity organization in Taiwan to its current international engagements, what experiences can Tzu Chi offer as references for different sectors to advance the SDGs?**

In 2010, Tzu Chi achieved special consultative status with the ECOSOC. That was also the year we first attended the annual Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) conference. Held every March, the CSW conference gathers NGOs and individuals from nearly 200 countries to advocate for women's rights and gender equality. The event provides an important platform for the exchange of ideas on these issues.

According to UN reports, progress on gender equality has stagnated over the past decade. There are over four billion women globally, with one-third having experienced domestic violence and





about 129 million girls not attending school. In light of this, the priority theme for the 68th CSW session this year was “Accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective.” The review theme was “Social protection systems, [and] access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.”

Tzu Chi’s commitment to gender equality is rooted in the foundation’s history. Decades ago, Dharma Master Cheng Yen recognized the challenges faced by indigenous women in eastern Taiwan. In 1989, when Tzu Chi established the Tzu Chi Junior College of Nursing in Hualien, eastern Taiwan, one of its goals was to expand educational and employment opportunities for indigenous girls in eastern Taiwan. The effort to support these girls’ educational aspirations and enhance their social status embodies the core values of gender equality.

And for the past 14 years, since our first conference, Tzu Chi’s UN team has actively promoted the spirit of our foundation’s “Bamboo Bank Era” at the CSW. This period refers to the time when our foundation was first founded, with 30 housewives each setting aside a little of their grocery money every day in a bamboo coin bank to

**Tzu Chi’s aid to Sierra Leone, West Africa, started in 2015 in response to an Ebola outbreak. Over the past nine years, Tzu Chi has partnered with organizations such as Caritas Freetown and the Healey International Relief Foundation to support the needy. This collaboration includes providing hot meals after disasters and enhancing resources for communities and schools.**

help the needy. From these housewives saving money to female volunteers engaging in humanitarian aid, Tzu Chi’s history aligns closely with the themes of this year’s CSW.

Tzu Chi set a record this year by hosting six meetings at the UN headquarters in New York, along with 20 side events and a special meeting where Tzu Chi’s Mozambique team and UNICEF discussed the care of women and children. Due to our annual participation in the CSW, Tzu Chi now regularly collaborates with five religious organizations to host interreligious meetings.

Over the years, following Master Cheng Yen’s guidance, we, as a member of the international community, have helped identify problems, build consensus, and propose practical actions. For instance, in response to the climate crisis, Tzu Chi joined the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2012. Since then, our efforts





**Tzu Chi regularly distributes rice to the needy in Mozambique. Many people in this country are impoverished and struggle to afford basic necessities, so this aid provides significant support. Some recipients have even gone on to become volunteers themselves.**

have included advocating for Ethical Eating Day 111 to promote vegetarianism and contribute to global environmental efforts.

As an observer for the United Nations Environment Programme, Tzu Chi has participated twice in the UN Environment Assembly conference in Kenya, where we shared our environmental protection work. By encouraging recycling efforts through this platform, we have inspired actions by African nations.

The 17th Sustainable Development Goal focus-





es on global partnerships, aiming to foster collaborations to promote sustainability. The concept proposed by Tzu Chi—“Global collaborations for the common good”—complements this goal.

In response to challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the Ukrainian refugee crisis, Tzu Chi shifted from direct aid to partnering with UNICEF, providing ten million U.S. dollars to support women and children refugees at the borders. This effort was extended to collaborations with 11 international partners. This year, Tzu Chi has fur-

ther expanded to 30 partnerships, including Médecins du Monde (Doctors of the World), Caritas Freetown in Sierra Leone, the Camillians, and Food for Ukraine, working together to deliver aid to those in need. Such partnerships underscore the importance of joining forces to make strides towards a more sustainable and equitable world.

**What do you think about the current trends and atmosphere surrounding the SDGs at international conferences? With only six years left until 2030 and many goals progressing slowly, do you feel pessimistic?**

I recall that during the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit in September 2015, when representatives from 193 UN member states adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, it was declared on-site: “The future of humanity and our planet is in our hands!”

Now we are halfway through the timeline. Progress on more than half of the SDGs is indeed very slow. In fact, 30 percent of countries have seen stagnation or regression, especially in crucial areas like poverty, hunger, and climate goals.

The COVID-19 pandemic, along with the triple crises of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution, has hindered developing countries from investing in goals such as good health and well-being and clean energy. Many countries and organizations are overwhelmed by heavy debts.

The aim of sustainable development is to bridge economic and geopolitical divides, restore trust, and rebuild unity. Without significant progress on this widely accepted roadmap, inequality will deepen, exacerbating global divisions and risks. No country can afford the failure of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

Despite the slow progress, the establishment of these goals highlights the necessity of global cooperation to create a better future. Even if progress is slow and challenges remain, taking steps forward is crucial.

The sustainable development of the planet and humanity requires collective effort. Crises can turn into opportunities. Tzu Chi’s role, beyond deepening our community efforts, includes analyzing the data we have available to us and collaborating with academia to share insights and inspire more change through various UN platforms before 2030.

As Master Cheng Yen always says, be mindful in all that we do and proceed with each step firmly and diligently. Let’s keep moving forward. If it’s the right thing to do, just do it. ❀





# Ending Poverty

## The First Step Toward Sustainability

By Yeh Tzu-hao

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

*Ending poverty is the first of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Addressing basic living needs is essential before tackling issues of fairness, justice, and social stability. Such a focus has also been central to Tzu Chi's efforts.*

One Saturday in May, Tzu Chi volunteers, wearing masks and gloves, lined up in the stairwell of an old apartment building in Banqiao, New Taipei City, northern Taiwan. Other volunteers, equipped with shovels and spades, scooped charred debris into buckets on the rooftop. Once filled, each bucket was passed from one person to another down the stairs. "Be careful, this one has nails!" they reminded each other, staying mindful of safety. "The entire rooftop home was destroyed by fire," explained volunteer Li Jin-ping (李瑾萍). "We asked our volunteers to help with the cleanup today."

A Tzu Chi home visit team had been assisting the family affected by the fire for over a year. The younger son, an elementary school student, had caught his teacher's attention due to his frequently dirty clothes and a skin condition. After learning about the family's situation, the teacher reported it to Tzu Chi. The boy's parents, both in their 30s, had unstable jobs and relied on odd jobs for income. Their home was cramped and disorganized, and their two children often went without dinner until late. Additionally, the children struggled with their studies. After Tzu Chi volunteers and social workers assessed the family's needs, regular home visits were arranged. Volunteers helped the elder son, in junior high school, with cleaning their home and began transporting the two children to and from Tzu Chi's tutoring classes every Saturday. With Tzu Chi's support, the family's situation gradually improved. However, in late April this year, a fire broke out at their home. Fortunately, there were no casualties.

"This is the first time I've participated in such a cleanup effort," said 23-year-old Ah Zhong, who is currently serving in the military. When Ah Zhong was in fifth grade, his father passed away from cancer, leaving the family without its main provider. With Ah Zhong and his younger brother still young, and their mother pregnant with their sister, the family fell into hardship. Thanks to help from the city government and charitable organizations like Tzu Chi, they managed to overcome those difficult times. Today, Ah Zhong was here to help and give back.

Also assisting with the cleanup was Cai Zheng Bao-zhu (蔡鄭寶珠), in her 60s. Over 20 years ago, her family became a low-income household after her husband fell ill and could no longer work. Tzu Chi helped get the family through their financial difficulties until they could stand on their feet again. She has since joined Tzu Chi as a volunteer, giving back to society.

Li Jin-ping found it gratifying to see past beneficiaries of the foundation's assistance become fellow helpers, realizing that her and other volunteers' efforts to support these families had not been in vain. "Every person we care for is unique," she said. "We must be patient and treat them like family to assist them in regaining their stability."

**Tzu Chi's approach to reducing poverty involves providing tailored assistance. This photo shows volunteers removing debris and assisting with the aftermath of a fire at a care recipient's home in Banqiao, northern Taiwan.**

HSIAO YIU-HWA



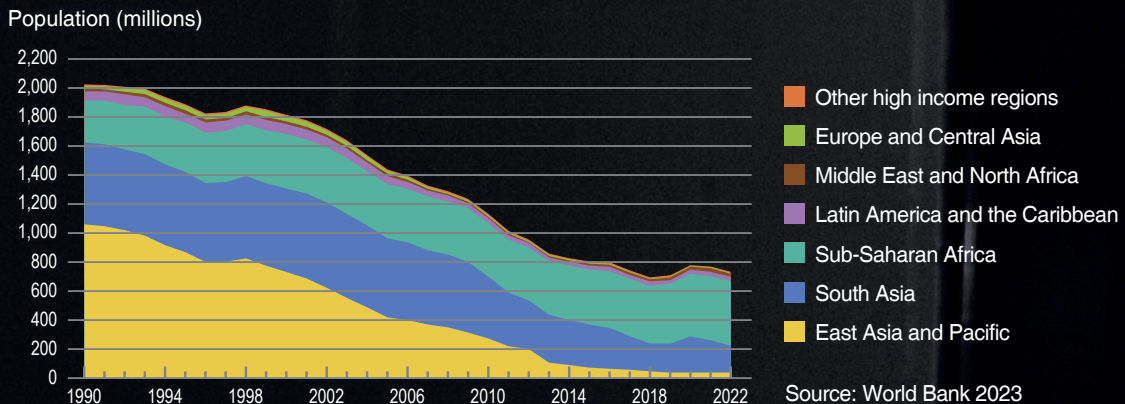




## Global Poverty Trends

In 2022, the World Bank adjusted the extreme poverty line to living on less than 2.15 U.S. dollars a day. While global trends show a continued decline in extreme poverty, over 700 million people still live below this threshold, with 60 percent residing in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The United Nations sets a lower extreme poverty line at living on less than 1.25 U.S. dollars a day. However, at the current rate of progress, achieving SDG 1, which aims to eradicate extreme poverty by 2030, remains unlikely.



### Focusing on the whole family

“Ending poverty” is the first United Nations Sustainable Development Goal, which aims to eradicate extreme poverty worldwide by 2030. Extreme poverty is defined by the UN as living on less than 1.25 U.S. dollars per person per day. Although the global poverty rate continues to decline, in some low-income countries, fewer than eight percent of disadvantaged people receive government social welfare assistance.

The causes of poverty are diverse and complex, including structural problems in the broader environment, generational cycles, and incidents of accidents or illness. Despite Taiwan’s status as a developed nation, it had approximately 240,000 low-income and lower-middle-income households in 2023, according to the Ministry of Health and Welfare. This represents 540,000 people out of a population of 23 million. Additionally, quite a few families need assistance but do not qualify for

government aid and must rely on support from private organizations.

The Tzu Chi Foundation has helped support more than 27,000 households annually in Taiwan over the past decade. Tzu Chi offers care to those struggling with poverty, illness, accidents, or the elderly living alone, from metropolitan Taipei to remote mountain and island regions. The foundation’s help includes monthly financial aid, problem-solving, and emotional support. Some families can quickly overcome their hardships with help from Tzu Chi, while others may require assistance for more than 10 or even 20 years.

Qiu Miao-ru (邱妙儒), from the Tzu Chi

**The causes of poverty vary across different age groups. Alleviating poverty requires thoughtful policy considerations and additional support from civil society organizations.**

HUANG XIAO-ZHE









Department of Charity Mission Development, explained Tzu Chi's approach to charity work in an interview marking the foundation's 55th anniversary: "Compared with most non-profits or charitable groups, which often serve specific populations, Tzu Chi's charity work is characterized by volunteer teams assisting people in disadvantaged situations without specific conditions."

When volunteers visit a family, they evaluate the needs of the entire household, not just the reported individual. They assess the number of family members, their needs, and how best to help. Volunteers offer assistance based on the family's educational, medical, or other needs, with at least one visit each month. Regular visits allow re-evaluation and adjustment of aid while building rapport and providing emotional support.

Lu Fang-chuan (呂芳川), director of the Tzu Chi Department of Charity Mission Development, elaborated: "Our care focuses on the whole person, the whole family, and the entire journey. We strive to find the most beneficial ways to assist every family member. With support and encouragement, individuals and families can transform their lives. Many examples within Tzu Chi illustrate this."

**Tzu Chi volunteers regularly visit people in need, forming family-like relationships. Besides helping with practical issues, they inspire positive changes in care recipients' mindsets through their companionship.**

HUANG XIAO-ZHE

He cited a case in Keelung, northern Taiwan, where both the husband and wife were deaf, mute, and physically disabled, making it difficult for them to earn a living. After receiving a report, Tzu Chi volunteers provided financial assistance and encouraged the couple to improve their home by cleaning and painting it. With their encouragement, the husband transitioned from a recipient of help to a contributor, using his carpentry skills to help repair the homes of other needy people and visiting Tzu Chi's Neihu campus to help make the foundation's signature eco-blankets.

Tzu Chi's grassroots model of care encourages recipients to become self-sufficient and to help others, aligning with modern social work's emphasis on empowerment. Individuals who are willing to stand up on their own have the best chance to escape poverty.



## Passive vs. proactive aid

“The ultimate goal of empowerment is to address poverty by fostering self-reliance through systemic and social reform,” explained social work scholar Wan Yu-wei (萬育維). He noted that the main problem with current social assistance in Taiwan is that both the government and private sectors primarily provide “passive assistance,” such as financial aid, but invest insufficiently in “proactive aid.” This results in long-term dependency, making it difficult for recipients to improve their circumstances.

Wan pointed out that proactive aid should focus on two key areas: first, creating job opportunities for those who can work, and second, helping people build their financial resources. For instance, if someone earns 10,000 NT dollars (US\$330) from work but still struggles financially, the government could offer monetary incentives to encourage them to keep working and help them save, instead of just providing subsidies for survival.

He added that while providing monetary assistance alone may seem straightforward and convenient, it is less effective in the long run. Empowering aid recipients to transition from dependency to self-reliance is crucial to helping them maintain their dignity.

Tzu Chi invests considerable effort in proactive aid. In its philanthropic work in Nepal and India, for example, Tzu Chi not only provides material aid to the needy but also organizes vocational training courses and cash-for-work programs to help individuals become self-sufficient. By equipping people with new skills and providing employment opportunities, Tzu Chi’s initiatives aim to foster long-term resilience.

Encouraging education is another aspect of Tzu Chi’s proactive aid. Volunteers urge children from aid recipient families not to give up on education due to financial difficulties, encouraging them to progress steadily through their studies to transform their lives. Lu Fang-chuan mentioned that Tzu Chi assists over 27,000 families each year in Taiwan, including around 20,000 students from elementary school to university and graduate school. In addition to stabilizing their families’ lives, Tzu Chi provides educational subsidies, scholarships, and tutoring programs to ensure that these students have the resources and support needed to succeed in their studies. By investing in education, Tzu Chi helps to break the cycle of poverty and opens up new opportunities for future generations.

Many underprivileged youths who have received Tzu Chi’s care in Taiwan have excelled, overcoming financial barriers to enter top universities and taking the first step toward transforming their lives. Among the 56 winners of the 2024 Presidential Education Award, which celebrates students who manage to thrive and shine despite facing significant challenges, 8 are children from Tzu Chi’s care recipient families.

In Tzu Chi, proactive aid has another layer of meaning. “To be honest, among those we care for, some are unable to earn ‘worldly wealth’ due to physical limitations or age,” said senior volunteer Lai Xiu-luan (賴秀鸞), who lives in southern Taiwan. “They want to work but can’t find anyone to hire them. However, they can earn ‘spiritual wealth,’ for example, by volunteering at Tzu Chi recycling stations.”

Lai explained that encouraging those who receive help to step out and do good deeds is not easy and requires patience and persistent encouragement. However, once they are willing to participate, their mental state and overall health improve.

Tzu Chi has set up recycling stations, assistive device outlets, and community care centers in most townships across Taiwan. Volunteers encourage Tzu Chi care recipients to contribute to society by volunteering. While there may be no monetary compensation, they contribute to society and the environment all the same, no less than those in paid positions. Echoing social work scholar Wan Yu-wei, this approach enhances aid recipients’ dignity as human beings.

## Complex challenges

Reflecting on 18 years of experience in home visits and care for the needy, volunteer Lai Xiu-luan noted that while Tzu Chi’s community resources and support in Taiwan have expanded—such as through the establishment of assistive device outlets and home repair teams, which enable the foundation to offer more tangible assistance—the challenges for providing care have also become more numerous and complex. Changes in the socioeconomic environment, population structure, and societal values have contributed to these growing difficulties.

For instance, many young people are not good at managing their finances and lack savings. When unexpected events or serious illnesses occur, they struggle to make ends meet, making them candidates for emergency assistance. Additionally, a notable number of young and middle-aged individuals struggle with drug





addiction, which places a heavy burden on their families. "Situations involving mental or psychological issues, dementia, elderly individuals living alone, or elderly couples relying on each other have also become more common," Lai explained. "How do we provide care for these individuals? How do we support their families?"

The diversity and complexity of cases handled by Tzu Chi in Taiwan today differ significantly from a decade ago, with recent shifts being even more pronounced. Psychological support and companionship have become even more crucial, sometimes surpassing the importance of financial assistance. Lai affirmed, "To provide better care, we need to acquire more relevant knowledge and participate in more training courses to enhance our skills and effectively support individuals and families."

For example, volunteers now encounter cases of "hermit-like" individuals who rarely leave their homes, highlighting the fact that modern social issues extend beyond economic factors to include significant psychological support needs. According to recent statistics from the Tzu Chi

Foundation, the number of cases receiving emotional support from Tzu Chi in Taiwan now surpasses those receiving long-term financial aid.

### **Transformative charity**

With regular visits to needy families and highly flexible care programs, Tzu Chi's charitable mission aims to support families until they achieve self-sufficiency. Founded in Taiwan in 1966 by Dharma Master Cheng Yen, Tzu Chi has been working to eliminate poverty since Taiwan's economically challenging times, before its economic takeoff.

Regarding Tzu Chi's charity work, the Master has articulated a path that transcends social classes. She believes in inspiring the wealthy to use their resources to help the disadvantaged. By doing so, they not only add to the welfare of the world but also create blessings for themselves. At the same time, she encourages the impoverished to do what they can to help others. Everyone has the capacity to give. "Even if their contribution is as little as a drop of water," the Master said, "it becomes part of the whole in a large pot, benefit-





ing many.” Everyone becomes rich spiritually through giving, regardless of their financial status.

For nearly six decades, Tzu Chi volunteers have implemented this philosophy and approach worldwide. In Africa, local volunteers, despite their own poverty, visit and assist those even more in need. Volunteers from Malaysia and Singapore leave their businesses and homes to take turns staying in Nepal and India, helping the local impoverished populations. In the sandy deserts of the Middle East, Jordanian volunteers regularly visit refugee settlements and destitute communities, providing medical, educational, and other assistance.

Poverty will likely exist as long as human society continues to function. However, Tzu Chi’s charitable experience shows that while poverty may not disappear, the associated issues of material scarcity, emotional dependency, and loss of dignity can be overcome.

To eliminate poverty, we need more than just money, food, and medicine. We also need to give love, respect, and encouragement. Tzu Chi believes there is love in everyone’s heart and in the ability of everyone to give. Those receiving

**Volunteers implement Tzu Chi’s model of care for disadvantaged families in their respective countries, providing not only poverty relief but also diverse forms of assistance. The picture on the opposite page shows members of the Tzu Chi International Medical Association arriving to provide health education at a household in a community of stateless people in Sabah, Malaysia (photo by Lim Su Nguan). Volunteers have also established learning centers for stateless children in Sabah to break the cycle of hardship. The picture above captures volunteers visiting the home of a child attending one of these learning centers to offer care and encouragement (photo by Lin Jia-ru).**

help, even if they are lacking in material things, can find their own value and achieve spiritual fulfillment by giving to others.

“Master Cheng Yen hopes that both the giver and the receiver can experience compassion and gratitude. This is crucial and embodies the spirit of our charity work,” concluded Yen Po-wen, CEO of the Tzu Chi charity mission. ❀





# Sowing Seeds of Change

## A Banana Planting Project in Davao, the Philippines

**By Ben Baquilod**

Photo by Harold Alzaga

*Some indigenous farmers in Talaingod, Davao del Norte, the Philippines, now have more steady income thanks to Tzu Chi Davao's initiative.*

“I am not the only one experiencing joy here. All the families who have planted banana trees are happy too,” said Eric Parcon, who, along with fellow farmers, was harvesting banana bunches in Santo Niño, Talaingod, Davao del Norte, in the Philippines’ Davao Region. Tzu Chi volunteers from Davao and Manila joined them, promptly purchasing their harvests and providing them with immediate earnings.

Eric and the other farmers couldn’t have imagined this scenario before 2022. That year, he and 40 other families from the Ata Manobo tribe began participating in Tzu Chi’s banana planting livelihood project in Talaingod. Prior to that, Eric relied solely on planting corn and abaca. These crops took 4 and 12 months, respectively, to harvest. Unfortunately, he could only get around 10,000 pesos (US\$170) for corn and 8,000 pesos (US\$137) for abaca. This equated to a total income of 38,000 pesos (US\$650) per year, or approximately 3,000 pesos (US\$52) per month. This was a paltry sum, especially for a young father of three.

“It was truly insufficient,” remarked Armando Dusanon Jr., Eric’s brother-in-law and a fellow farmer. The meager income from their harvests every four months only allowed them to enjoy rice—a luxury for them—for a brief week. After that, they would revert to their customary routine of eating only once a day, mostly relying on cassava.

Food wasn’t the only challenge in their community. Living in a remote rural area, they also faced difficulties accessing electricity, information, and medical care. “Whenever our children fell ill, we couldn’t afford a trip to the hospital due to

financial constraints,” said Armando. “Our earnings weren’t even enough to meet our daily needs.”

But a transformation has taken place for Armando, Eric, and their community since Tzu Chi’s banana planting livelihood project in Talaingod began to show results. In the summer of 2023, the banana seedlings they planted 19 months earlier started providing them with a consistent harvest of new fruit every two weeks, eliminating the months of waiting for income.

“I’ve seen the improvement in their lives ever since, and it genuinely warms my heart,” said Ariel Garao, the volunteer in charge of the project. “What’s beautiful about this project is its sustainability as long as they continue to work on it.”

Tzu Chi volunteers in Davao started working with the indigenous peoples of Talaingod when the pandemic started in 2020. They saw how difficult the lives of the Ata Manobo were and recognized their need for assistance. In response, they

### Tzu Chi’s Livelihood Improvement Programs

- Indonesia: Great Love Mobile Noodle Stall Lending Program for small vendors.
- The Philippines: Training in dental assistance, business marketing, welding, computer repair, and customer service English. Tricycles and driver training for Typhoon Haiyan survivors.
- Nepal, India, South Africa, and Myanmar: Sewing classes.





distributed rice and other groceries in Talaingod to help residents through the pandemic. They later followed up with the banana planting project, providing seedlings, organic fertilizers, and technical expertise. Although the banana plants grew more slowly due to the use of organic fertilizers and sustainable farming practices, the quality and quantity of the fruit were exceptional. By August 2023, the trees were heavily laden with fruit, and new shoots began to emerge after harvesting.

For Eric Parcon's family, the banana planting project has alleviated some of the challenges of their poverty-stricken life. "Compared with eating only once a day before, we can now enjoy three meals a day with rice and viand," he shared. "We also get to savor our banana produce. It's truly delicious!"

Fortunately, their community now has electricity, and Eric was able to purchase a TV, providing them with access to news and information, as well as a bit of entertainment. "After a tiring day, it's nice to watch TV with my family and unwind," he said, smiling.

He proudly mentioned that he can now give some money to his children when asked for candy. "As a father, it pained me when I couldn't provide

**Residents of Santo Niño, Talaingod, Davao del Norte, joined Tzu Chi's agricultural poverty alleviation project. With the assistance of volunteers, they implemented an economic model that has improved their living conditions.**

for them," he said, teary-eyed. "But now, even if it's just for candy, I feel so happy when I see their joy."

With a steady income from banana harvests, Eric and Armando were able to acquire a motorcycle through monthly installments, improving transportation to the market where they sell and buy goods for their families. "Previously, we had to walk for six hours to reach the market. Now, it takes us only half an hour," said Armando, with a sigh of relief.

Armando can also now provide an allowance to his young children for school. "Before, they would go to school with nothing. Now, I can give them five pesos, and they're ecstatic," he exclaimed. "That makes me happy as well."

Armando holds one dream for his children—to receive a good education and lead better lives in the future. "I will continue to plant bananas for them to finish school," he affirmed. ❀



# Balancing Compassion and Caution

By Wu Hsiao-ting

Photo by Hsiao Yiu-hwa

*A personal encounter highlights the delicate balance between compassion and vigilance in our everyday lives.*

Something happened recently while I was enjoying breakfast at a café that made me reflect on finding the right balance between kindness and caution. A high school-aged girl came up to me and asked to use my phone to call her mom. I was immediately suspicious, due to all the warnings about scams I had heard. I declined her request, worried that I might be enabling a scammer. Later, though, I began to feel guilty about my response, especially when I remembered how crowded the café was, with a long line of people waiting for their takeout. Perhaps the girl just needed to inform her mom that her breakfast was taking longer than expected. I started wondering if I had become too cautious, even to the point of being unkind. This made me think about how to balance compassion with protecting myself from deceit.

This situation reminded me of something Eric Moo (巫啟賢), a well-known singer in the Chinese-speaking world, once said in a TV interview. He said he always gives money to beggars, even though his friends warn him that many are fakes. Moo's view is: what if there's a time he doesn't give, and it's someone who really needs help? He'd rather give money to ten people, even if eight are faking, because he can afford it and he

knows he's helped the two who genuinely need it. He says having faith in others brings him happiness. I remember being moved by his words.

Thinking about this, I realized that being too cautious might make us miss real chances to help others. If we're too guarded, we might ignore or dismiss people who genuinely need help, losing opportunities to make a positive difference. At the same time, feeling guilty about possibly having turned away someone who truly needed help can weigh heavily on us.

Finding the right balance between being kind and being cautious isn't easy. However, looking back, I see that I might have been too quick to say no. A thoughtful check of the situation might have helped me make a better decision. Even if I was unsure about letting her use my phone, I could have offered to make the call for her. That way, I'd still be helpful without exposing myself to deceit.

It's important to trust your instincts but also use a bit of common sense. Learning about common scams can help you tell genuine requests from potential tricks. It's about staying informed while keeping an open heart. The world could use more kindness and less suspicion. Finding this balance can be tricky, but it's worth it to keep the world a warmer and wiser place. ❊







# More Than a Wheelchair

By Ye Jin-hong, Yang Qiu-yan, and Zhu Xiu-lian

Edited and translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Photos by Ye Jin-hong

*A mother's offhand comment led to a series of generous acts, providing more support than expected for her daughter's rehabilitation and a fellow patient's needs.*

“It’s really hot, and pushing you is exhausting,” Li Feng-chun (李鳳春) mumbled absentmindedly as she pushed her daughter Lin Jun-yi’s (林君憶) wheelchair down the street under the scorching sun. Though Feng-chun didn’t give it much thought when she said it, her daughter took it to heart. Jun-yi couldn’t bear the thought of her 70-year-old mother exhausting herself every day, pushing her to her rehabilitation sessions. But after brain surgery had severely impaired her mobility, she knew that consistent rehabilitation was her only hope of regaining her functions.

Determined to lighten her mother’s load, Jun-yi searched online for a wheelchair that could make things easier, though she struggled to articulate exactly what she was looking for. Fortunately, she persisted. She eventually connected with Tzu Chi’s Eco-Friendly Assistive Device Program, which provides free, second-hand assistive devices to those in need. Fang Qi-hui (方奇輝), a volunteer with the program, patiently listened to Jun-yi over the phone. He found it difficult to fully understand her situation, so he decided to visit her in person. Jun-yi lives in Zhunan Township, Miaoli County, northern Taiwan. After meeting face-to-face, he delivered an electric wheelchair to her and taught her how to operate it. After some practice on the neighborhood sidewalks, she quickly got the hang of it.

The daily commute to rehabilitation took half an hour, followed by an hour of therapy. Pushing a manual wheelchair back and forth had been tough on her mother, especially during the hotter parts of the day. With the electric wheelchair from

Tzu Chi, however, Feng-chun could now simply walk alongside her daughter to and from rehab. Volunteer Fang was confident that the new wheelchair would make the journeys much easier, thereby relieving some of Jun-yi’s guilt. Even better, Jun-yi happily noted, “Now I can go wherever I want by myself.”

Feng-chun felt a deep sense of relief as the rehabilitation sessions began producing results. She was happy to see her daughter’s improvements, such as being able to get up and go to the bathroom on her own at night. But her greatest hope remained that Jun-yi would be able to walk again.

Just when it seemed that everything was finally falling into place, Fang noticed that the threshold at Jun-yi’s home posed a challenge for the wheelchair. The uneven surface could cause the wheelchair to tip over, especially before Jun-yi became fully proficient in using it. Coincidentally, the volunteer who accompanied Fang, Yang Wen-zong (楊文宗), was a carpenter. After discussing the issue with Fang, he decided to make a small threshold ramp. They measured the dimensions on-site, returned to their local assistive device warehouse, found a solid wood board, planed it, and then installed it in front of the door. It fit perfectly. When Jun-yi tested it, it worked beautifully.

Jun-yi expressed her profound gratitude for the volunteers’ help—not only had they provided her with a powered wheelchair and adjusted its speed for her safety, but they also took the time to build the threshold ramp. She went on to share that during her rehabilitation, she had met many





**Yang Wen-zong (right) installs the completed threshold ramp at the entrance to Lin Jun-yi's home, making it safer for her wheelchair to navigate the height difference at the door.**

fellow patients in need of assistive devices and had informed them about Tzu Chi's program, hoping they too could receive help at no cost. "You are truly kind, offering a service like this. This can help so many people," she told the volunteers.

During a visit to Jun-yi, Fang happened to meet Ms. Ko, one of Jun-yi's fellow patients. Ms. Ko was holding a cloth sheet she had bought online, thinking it was a bedsheet when she placed her order. However, when she received it, she realized it was just a piece of cloth. "This can't be fixed on my bed and can't be returned," she said. "I've asked several clothing alteration shops for help, but none of them were willing to take my order." Fang thought of his 85-year-old mother, Fang Zheng Feng-yu (方鄭鳳玉), who was skilled in sewing. With Ms. Ko's permission, he took the cloth home and asked his mother if she could sew on some elastic and turn it into a bedsheet.

Though Fang's mother had never sewn a bedsheet before, she relied on her tailoring skills to figure it out, and expertly completed the task. Upon receiving the finished product, Ms. Ko asked Jun-yi to pass along her gratitude, saying, "A big thank-you to the Tzu Chi brother's mother!"

Through his volunteer work, Fang has realized the power of collective effort. "When people are in need, I believe everyone is willing to lend a hand," he said.



**Fang Qi-hui (right) accompanies Lin Jun-yi as she practices operating the electric wheelchair.**





# After the Deluge in Southern Taiwan

**By Tzu Chi documenting volunteers**

Edited and translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

*Typhoon Gaemi's relentless downpour wreaked havoc on southern Taiwan, but Tzu Chi's swift and compassionate response provided essential aid and hope amidst the devastation.*





Volunteers clean a flood victim's home after Typhoon Gaemi in Fenjihu, a low-lying area in Baihe District, Tainan.

HUANG XIAO-ZHE





**T**yphoon Gaemi, the first to hit Taiwan this year, made landfall in Yilan County at midnight on July 25 and exited the island through Taoyuan City just 4 hours and 20 minutes later. Despite weakening after landfall, the typhoon's outer edges, combined with southwesterly winds, brought torrential rain to southern Taiwan. Chiayi, Tainan, Kaohsiung, and Pingtung saw rainfall nearly matching the peak daily totals recorded during Typhoon Morakot in 2009. Severe flooding was reported across the southern regions.

The Bazhang River in Chiayi overflowed early on July 25, flooding homes up to the first floor. Liuxin Village in Shuishang Township, located near the riverbank, was particularly affected. Village Chief Chen Huang-ru (陳皇如) said that when the typhoon warning was issued, he, as usual, went into alert mode, monitoring the water levels at the floodgates day and night. However, despite such vigilance, flooding still occurred.

Mr. Li, a resident of Liuxin Village, recounted that village officers broadcasted warnings just before the river overflowed, urging residents to evacuate to the township shelter. However, living alone and severely disabled, his only option was to take refuge at his sister's home in the city. "Two days later, when the water receded, I returned home to a scene of devastation," he said. "I was overwhelmed and didn't know what to do, so I sought help from the village chief. I'm deeply grateful to the Tzu Chi volunteers who came to assist!"

**Volunteers use rescue boats to deliver hot meals to flooded areas in Madou, Tainan, on July 26. Typhoon Gaemi had already passed by that time, but heavy rain continued in the region.** CHEN HE-SHENG

On July 28, over a hundred Tzu Chi volunteers gathered at the Shuishang Township Office, equipped with brooms, basins, buckets, hoses, shovels, and other tools. They divided into groups and headed into the community to help residents clean up. Along the way, they saw piles of water-damaged furniture and debris, while grapple trucks and bulldozers operated alongside garbage trucks collecting the debris. Residents expressed their gratitude upon seeing the volunteers, putting their palms together and saying, "Oh! Such a large group! Thank you, Tzu Chi brothers and sisters. We're so fortunate to have you!"

A Tzu Chi team had earlier conducted home visits in Shuishang Township and discovered that some families lacked the resources to clean up on their own. In response, they asked village chiefs to compile a list of homes needing cleaning assistance. Initially, only a few households were reported, but as volunteers arrived on-site on July 28, more residents requested help. The volunteers worked together to clean up the mud and remove debris. They also assisted villagers in disposing of or returning large items of furniture to their original positions, accelerating the recovery process.

Village Chief Chen Huang-ru remarked that



# Tzu Chi Responds to Typhoon Gaemi

## Disaster Overview:

Typhoon Gaemi, the first major storm to hit Taiwan since Typhoon Nepartak in 2016, resulted in 11 deaths, 1 person missing, and 904 injuries. The typhoon coincided with the annual astronomical high tides, leading to river overflows in some areas. Severe flooding impacted Yunlin, Chiayi, Tainan, Kaohsiung, and Pingtung. In Kaohsiung, the overflow of the Love River triggered a Level-1 flood alert in more than half of the city's administrative districts, submerging the basements of 376 buildings.

## Tzu Chi's Response:

- Supported government evacuation and placement measures in affected areas by providing hot meals, drinking water, care packages, blankets, folding beds, and privacy cubicles.
- Delivered hot meals and daily necessities to flood-affected areas. For example, on July 30, volunteers set up a service station at a residential building in Kaohsiung's Sanmin District. The building had three flooded basement levels and was also facing ongoing water and power outages. Volunteers provided supplies to both residents and military personnel and engineers involved in repairs.
- Presented gift packs or emergency cash to households in severely affected areas in five southern counties and cities.
- Assisted elderly and disadvantaged residents, as well as affected volunteers, in cleaning their homes.
- Organized free medical clinics:  
July 27: Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital served in Shuishang, Dalin, and Xikou Townships.  
August 3: Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital and Douliou Tzu Chi Hospital served in Shuishang Township.

## Relief Statistics:

- Household visits: 12,919
- Hot meals: 26,563
- Blankets: 75
- Folding beds provided: 367 occasions
- Privacy cubicles provided: 145 occasions
- Gift packs: 8,567
- Volunteer shifts: 10,085

Statistics from July 24 to August 22, 2024

7/25 19:00  
Makes landfall in  
Fujian, China

7/25 04:20  
Exits to sea at Xinwu,  
Taoyuan, Taiwan

7/25 00:00  
Makes landfall in  
Nan'ao, Yilan, Taiwan

Changhua  
Yunlin  
Chiayi  
Tainan  
Kaohsiung  
Pingtung

— Path of Typhoon Gaemi  
■ Heavily hit areas aided  
by Tzu Chi





the flood had left his village in disarray, with an unbearable stench. "Tzu Chi not only provided us with material assistance but also made us feel genuinely cared for and supported. This has been a tremendous encouragement as we work to restore our lives."

Volunteers returned to Chen's village on August 3. That morning, the community broadcast echoed with Chen's reminders to the villagers: "Today, Tzu Chi volunteers will visit affected households to offer support. Please stay home and wait for them. Doctors from Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital will also be providing free medical services at Liu'an Temple. If you need medical attention, don't hesitate to drop by."

### Meal service

Tzu Chi offices in over a dozen counties and cities across Taiwan swiftly established disaster response centers after the land warning for

Typhoon Gaemi was issued at 11:30 a.m. on July 23. Volunteers took inventory and organized emergency supplies, ready to support the government's shelter and relief efforts. Later, due to the typhoon, people living in southern counties and cities had three consecutive days off. For those trapped by floodwaters or busy restoring their homes, a hot meal became a precious comfort. Volunteers ultimately distributed over 26,000 boxed meals in the aftermath of the storm.

Though the Liucuo and Baimi neighborhoods in Gangshan District, Kaohsiung, hadn't experienced flooding in years, they were not spared this time. Floodwaters rose to waist height on the morning of July 25. The heads of both neighborhoods sought assistance from Tzu Chi. Volunteers immediately delivered supplies and boxed meals.

The following morning, volunteers braved intermittent strong winds and heavy rain to deliver additional aid to Liucuo, including over 800





**With military assistance, volunteers deliver hot meals to Shuishang Township, Chiayi (far left, photo by Zhang Ju-fen). In Kaohsiung, volunteers bring hot meals to a flooded community near a tributary of the Love River (above, photo by Cai Xiang-ling). A resident expresses gratitude with a note when returning his meal box; part of the note reads: “This is the best boxed meal I’ve ever had!” (inset photo, courtesy of the Chiayi County Government).**

loaves of bread, 600 packs of cookies, and 25 boxes of bottled water. Volunteer Ou Jin-ye (歐金葉), who leads a culinary team, received a notification about flood victims’ need for boxed lunches and quickly sprang into action. She organized a team to purchase ingredients, cook, and pack the meals. Within just a few hours, 370 packed lunches were delivered to the activity center in Baimi.

Around the same time, Tzu Chi volunteers in other areas of Kaohsiung fully mobilized, splitting into groups to support flood-affected communities. While distributing bread, they also checked if residents needed boxed meals for lunch that day. Yao Hao-zhe (姚皓哲), a resident of Xiaoshun Street in Sanmin District, gratefully accepted the bread and said, “This will be my first meal of the day.” He recalled going downstairs at around 5 a.m. on July 25 to check the water level of Baozhu Ditch, a tributary of the Love River, in front of his home. The water level was still low at

the time, but just two hours later, it surged over the concrete embankment, flooding the area nearly half a story high.

Amid torrential rain, volunteers returned to Xiaoshun Street with 120 boxed lunches at 11 a.m. Residents said they had been busy cleaning up after the half-story-high floodwaters receded and had no time to cook, relying only on dry food to stave off their hunger. These hot meals were truly a blessing.

Earlier that day, before 7 a.m., Tzu Chi’s Kaohsiung Jing Si Hall was bustling with activity. A team in the basement received bread from a chain bakery, while volunteers in another area prepared gift packs for flood survivors. Culinary volunteers washed, chopped, and cooked ingredients in large woks and pots in the kitchen. Everyone was busy, yet focused and organized.

“We had purchased and prepared ingredients over the past two days in anticipation of this



need," said volunteer Wu Xiu-xia (吳秀霞). She led a team of 50 volunteers in cooking and packing the food. Yan Yue-tao (顏月桃), another volunteer, added, "We received the task last night around 6 p.m., so I reached out to my contacts to gather more ingredients. We can easily make 1,600 boxed lunches!" By 11 a.m., the boxed lunches were ready and delivered along four routes to Qiaotou, Ziguan, and other locations in Kaohsiung.

### More demand for food

Although the typhoon had passed Taiwan by the morning of July 26, areas in Yunlin and Chiayi had accumulated over a thousand millimeters of rain. Low-lying regions in Dalin, Xikou, and Xingang Townships were flooded, leaving many homes isolated like islands. With food hard to obtain and many restaurants closed, local governments urgently requested boxed meals from Tzu Chi. The demand was high, but severe weather

and the fact that many volunteers' homes were affected by the disaster made manpower scarce. Zeng Ya-wen (曾雅雯), a Tzu Chi volunteer who works at Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital, reached out to the hospital's Department of Nutritional Therapy for assistance. They readily agreed and asked Zeng to gather help for packing the meals.

Zeng quickly rallied her colleagues. The first batch of stir-fried noodles was ready within 15 minutes, but the number of requested meals quickly increased from 1,000 to 1,500. The nutritionists emptied the refrigerators and contacted suppliers for more ingredients.

While the kitchen buzzed with activity, volunteers prepared vehicles for meal delivery. More volunteers gathered in various townships, ready to collaborate with local government personnel to distribute the meals in the disaster areas. Later, as they ventured into heavily flooded zones, they were joined by military, police, and firefighters who came to assist.





Volunteers received another request for food assistance in Pingtung County, Taiwan's southernmost area. On the afternoon of July 24, 86 residents of Taiwu Township were urgently evacuated to a shelter. With no time to prepare food, the township head, Pan Ming-fu (潘明福), contacted Tzu Chi volunteer Dai Ming-an (戴明安) for help.

The fierce winds and rain had caused many stores to close. Volunteer Wu Pei-ru (吳佩儒) visited two supermarkets that were still open but found the bread shelves empty. Several other volunteers searched for open bakeries and managed to purchase over a hundred loaves of bread.

The volunteers gathered at Tzu Chi's Chaozhou office, loaded the bread and other supplies into vehicles, and set off in the dark for the shelter. The wind and rain blurred their vision, and falling branches along the way were alarming, but they finally arrived at 8 p.m. The evacuees were overjoyed. The children were especially

thrilled to see the cookies, temporarily forgetting the challenges caused by the typhoon.

At the shelter, the volunteers noticed elderly residents sleeping on the floor. They reported this to Zhang Zhi-xiang (張智翔), a social worker at Tzu Chi's Pingtung office. He responded by delivering folding beds, arriving just before 10 p.m. Volunteer Wu Pei-ru also noticed the lack of water dispensers in the shelter, which meant that the instant noodles they had brought couldn't be served. She and the other volunteers decided on the spot to provide hot meals for lunch the next day.

The next morning, with food ingredients still hard to obtain, Wu contacted Ms. Su, a Tzu Chi donating member who ran a grocery business, for help. Ms. Su immediately went to her warehouse, gathered supplies, and personally delivered them to the Tzu Chi Chaozhou office.

However, after checking the supplies, Wu found there still wasn't enough food. She made a trip to the local wholesale market, only to find it



After the floodwaters receded, volunteers helped vulnerable and elderly residents, as well as affected volunteers, clean their homes. In the left photo, volunteers clear debris from a traditional courtyard house in Beigang, Yunlin (photo by Cai Yi-da). The above photo shows volunteers removing waterlogged items from the flooded basement of a store in Zuoying, Kaohsiung (photo by Wang Zhong-yi).





flooded and closed. Standing in the water, she called Ms. Su again, who generously said, “Come and take whatever you need! I won’t charge you a penny.”

Later that day, 18 volunteers braved the rain to gather at the Tzu Chi office. Within two hours, they had prepared 130 boxed meals. The journey to deliver them was again fraught with wind and rain, but the volunteers took comfort in knowing that the evacuees would receive freshly cooked meals to warm their stomachs and hearts.

### Helping the elderly and disabled clean up

Typhoon Gaemi’s devastating floods left countless homes in need of cleaning. Tzu Chi volunteers across various regions assessed their manpower and decided to focus on helping the elderly, disabled, and fellow volunteers.

On August 1, Chiayi volunteers arrived in Yixing Village, Shuishang Township, to carry out a cleanup mission for Ms. Zhang, a Tzu Chi care recipient. Although a week had passed since the typhoon, some roads remained flooded.

The volunteers quickly set to work upon arriving at Ms. Zhang’s home. The ground and floors were slippery, causing frequent slips and falls.

**Volunteers visit a household in Annei, Yanshui, Tainan, where they deliver a gift pack and offer support.**

HUANG XIAO-ZHE

They shoveled mud out of the house and carried damaged items outside for disposal, finding that nearly everything inside was ruined. When asked how high the water had risen, Zhang pointed to the roof, saying, “It filled the entire house.”

Zhang, who lived alone and was in poor health, had been under Tzu Chi’s care since last year. Because her house is located in a low-lying area, she was the first to evacuate to the shelter set up at the township office when the typhoon hit. Volunteer Ye Xiu-rong (葉秀榮) shared that Zhang was so apprehensive about returning home afterwards that she stayed on at the shelter even after all the other evacuees had left.

While Zhang was still at the shelter, Lin Mingnan (林名男), deputy superintendent of Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital, arrived to provide free medical care to flood survivors. Zhang, feeling both stressed and grateful, said, “Thank Tzu Chi for providing us at the shelter with beds, care packages, and hot food, and thank the medical professionals from



Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital for their healthcare. However, despite this good care, I still worry about whether my house was swept away.”

This prompted a visit to her home by volunteers on July 31. The house was still standing but in a state of disarray. Volunteers organized a cleanup effort for the following day, planning for 15 people. It was a pleasant surprise when 25 showed up. The house smelled foul, and some volunteers even vomited while they worked, but they pressed on. After a few hours, the rooms and kitchen were spotless. Zhang hugged Ye Xiurong, tearfully saying, “Now I have a place to sleep. I’m so happy!”

Land subsidence in Yunlin’s coastal areas had left many homes in Dagou, Shuilin Township, situated lower than the roads. The combination of high tides and heavy rain from Typhoon Gaemi caused flooding that took a long time to recede. Mr. Chen, a 68-year-old with mobility issues who lives alone, was evacuated to a shelter during the typhoon. With no time to move his belongings to higher ground, all his furniture and appliances were submerged. On August 4, over 20 volunteers arrived at his home to help him clean up.

Volunteers moved everything outside to clean or discard. Cai Qing-sen (蔡清森) used a high-pressure washer to clean the walls and floors. Since the house lacked drains, Cai Jin-ding (蔡進丁) and Tang Shi-xian (湯士賢) scooped up the dirty water, while Xia Ying-qi (夏縈棋) carried the buckets outside to empty into the gutter. The volunteers returned what furniture they could salvage after cleaning, restoring Mr. Chen’s home as best they could.

Mr. Su and his wife, in their 70s and childless, live in a brick house with a metal roof in Xinjia, Houbi District, Tainan. The typhoon left their home in a mess. Due to their age, they requested Tzu Chi’s assistance. Around 30 volunteers helped move out soaked furniture and clean out the mud inside. Mr. Su was deeply grateful.

Volunteers returned to visit the couple a week later. Mr. Su, touched by their support, said, “It’s wonderful to have Tzu Chi. I can’t express my gratitude to you enough. Seeing you all again makes me want to cry.” Everything usable inside the house had been elevated, but it was otherwise empty—no bed or furniture, just the lingering smell of disinfectant. The couple was staying in a friend’s vacant house, but they returned each morning to continue putting their home back together.

Mr. Su shared, “The flooding wasn’t this bad 15 years ago with Typhoon Morakot, nor 6 years

ago during that August rainstorm! This time, the water came so fast. I had to drive my wife to safety. It was like a vast ocean, just like the end of the world.” Overcome with emotion, he began to cry, so a volunteer stepped forward to comfort him.

Once he had calmed down, he added, “After Typhoon Morakot, we managed on our own without asking for help. My wife and I quietly cleaned up. But now that we’re older, I told her we shouldn’t push ourselves too hard. We felt so helpless. Fortunately, you came. I’m truly grateful.”

### Home visits

In addition to providing meals and cleanup services, volunteers mobilized in late July and early August to visit residents in the hardest-hit areas, delivering gift packs and offering solace. Each gift pack contained a letter of comfort from Dharma Master Cheng Yen, multigrain powder, rice crackers, soy milk powder, and more. Ye Ya-ling (葉雅玲), a social worker at Tzu Chi’s Tainan office, explained the purpose of these visits: “First, to deliver Master Cheng Yen’s words of comfort and Tzu Chi’s blessings; second, to identify families that may need further assistance.”

Ms. Xu, a resident of Xinjia, Houbi District, raises ducks for a living. She lost all the ducks in one of her two duck houses to the flood, with only a few surviving in the other. Overcome with sadness and frustration, she was moved to tears by Master Cheng Yen’s concern and the blessings from Tzu Chi volunteers worldwide. Seeing her tears, volunteer Zhuang Jin-zhi (莊錦治) quickly embraced her in a comforting hug.

Xie He Mei-mei (謝何美梅) from Madou District, Tainan, smiled brightly when she saw the Tzu Chi volunteers at her door. “It’s a real comfort to know that people continue to care about us,” she said. She was waiting for someone to repair her household appliances and still needed to put her large furniture back in place. She recounted the helplessness she and her 86-year-old husband felt when the floodwaters came. When the volunteers asked if she had been eating well, she smiled and replied, “When there weren’t Tzu Chi meals, I just ate instant noodles.”

Though Typhoon Gaemi brought destruction and misery, the presence of Tzu Chi volunteers, who offered a listening ear and support, provided much-needed consolation. The volunteers hoped that Master Cheng Yen’s blessings and the care and love from all Tzu Chi volunteers would bring peace to the hearts of those affected. ❀



# Noto's Path to Revival

## A Journey of Heart and Hope in Japan

By Jessica Yang

Edited and translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

*Noto has a way of winning hearts, making it easy to become emotionally attached to the area. As the region works toward recovering from the January earthquake, we continually ask ourselves: what more can we do to help?*

There is an old Japanese proverb that says, "The people of Noto are gentle and kind, and even the land reflects this." The Noto Peninsula, located in Japan's central Ishikawa Prefecture, extends over a hundred kilometers (62 miles) into the Sea of Japan. After an earthquake struck the peninsula on January 1, Tzu Chi launched disaster relief efforts. This led to my visits as a reporter for Tzu Chi's Da Ai TV. I am grateful for the opportunity to deeply connect with this land through my assignment.

When people hear about the Noto Peninsula, they often think of *satoyama* and *satoumi*. But what are these concepts?

Satoyama refers to rural areas, including villages, farmland, forests, grasslands, bamboo groves, and more, managed by people to create and maintain rich natural environments. These areas support diverse plant and animal life while preserving and nurturing unique traditional cultures. Satoumi pertains to coastal areas where people benefit from the sea's bounty while also protecting marine life.

The Noto Peninsula is characterized by low mountains and hills. With the peninsula surrounded on three sides by the Sea of Japan, its coastline is rich in biodiversity. The residents' lives have always been intertwined with the sea, farmland, and forests. They have preserved historic festivals and continue to practice traditional crafts passed down through the centuries, such as *Wajima* lacquerware and *Suzu* pottery.

Residents of the Noto Peninsula live in harmony with nature, respecting the heavens and cherishing the earth. This way of life has been inherited for generations. In June 2011, the area's *satoyama* and *satoumi* were designated a Globally Important Agricultural Heritage System by the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization, bringing global attention to the region.

I visited the Noto Peninsula for the first time in April 2024 with Hsieh Ching-kuei (謝景貴), advisor for the CEO's Office of the Tzu Chi charity mission, and Teng Chih-ming (鄧志銘), a colleague from Da Ai TV. Brother Hsieh remarked at the time, "Tzu Chi's basic principles for disaster relief have always been to attend to both the physical and emotional needs of survivors to help them return to a normal life. However, with global warming accelerating, we need to incorporate innovative methods of aid. Beyond attending to survivors' physical and emotional needs, we should integrate the concept of 'sustainability' into the recovery process."

This made me wonder: aside from distributing cash aid to affected households, what more can we do for Noto's agriculture, cultural assets, and elderly care? Recognizing the potential for a new model of international disaster relief for Tzu Chi, we decided to focus our report on these areas while documenting the region's recovery efforts. During months of filming across multiple trips, we witnessed the community's resilience and unity and were deeply touched by the





unique warmth and hospitality of the Noto Peninsula.

### Devastated

The breathtaking scenery of Noto immediately captivated us as we drove onto the main access road to the peninsula in April. The azure Sea of Japan was on one side, and lush green hills on the other. For a moment, I felt as though I was driving along Taiwan's Hualien-Taitung Coastal Highway. The stunning views almost made us forget that the Noto Peninsula was a region recovering from an earthquake.

As we continued our journey, the landscape began to change. Construction vehicles and repair crews became more frequent, and the sight of buckled and cracked roads grew common. It was easy to imagine how isolated the Noto Peninsula must have felt in the early days after the quake.

Wajima lacquerware artist Hiroyuki Ejiri, whose house is by the sea between Wajima and Suzu, shared his experience of the earthquake. He recounted how the tremor was so intense that he and his family struggled to stand and had to run outside for safety. Observing the sea water receding, they feared a tsunami and quickly moved to higher ground. Fortunately, the tsunami did not materialize. After the tsunami warning was lifted,

**After a strong tremor struck the Noto Peninsula in Japan on January 1, volunteers repeatedly traveled to affected areas like Wajima and met with government agencies to discuss aid models.** CHEN JING-HUI

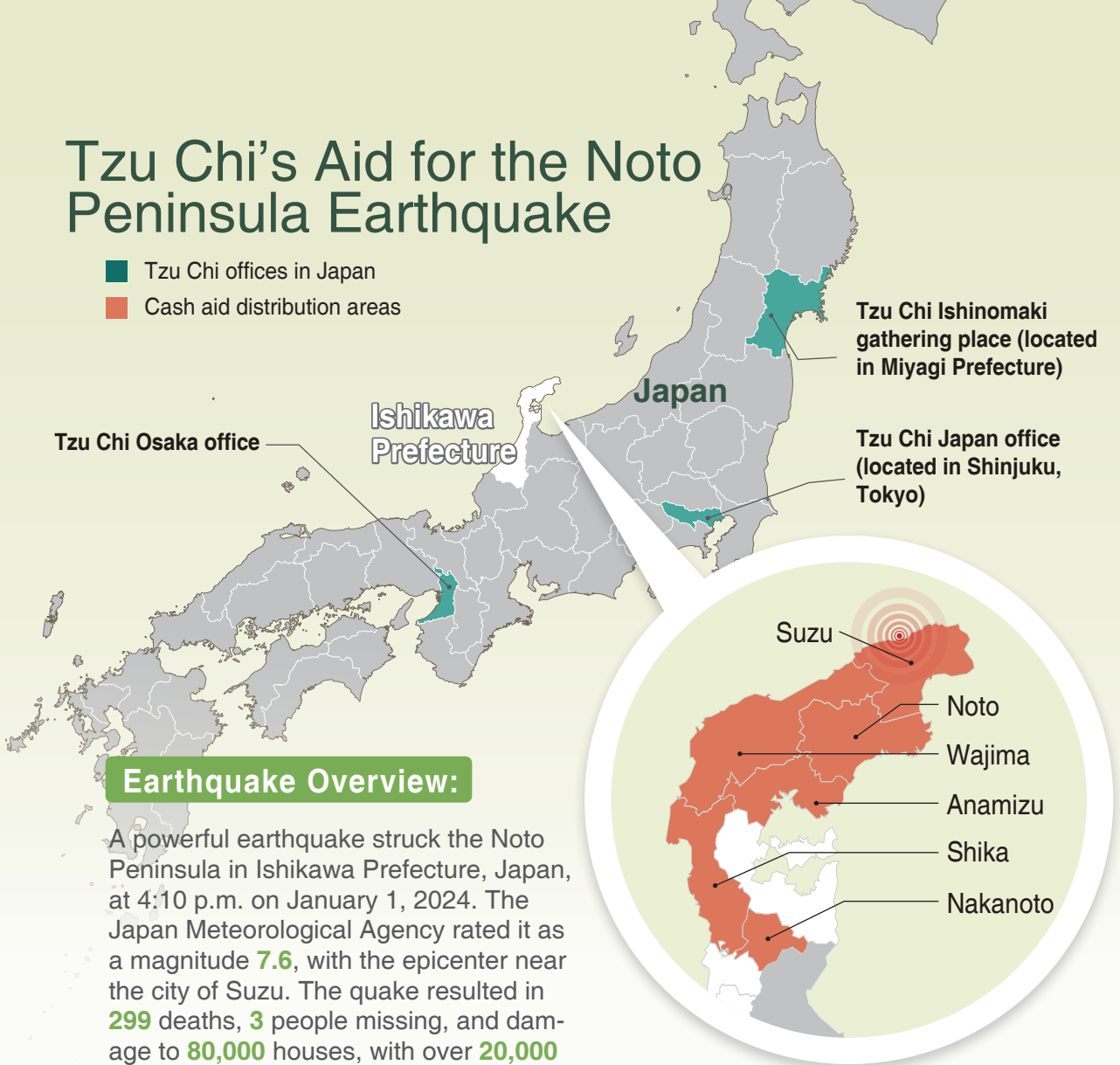
he attempted to drive his family to Kanazawa for refuge. "However, both the road to Wajima and the road to Suzu were cut off, and the phones were down. We were completely isolated," he said. "The roads were reopened three days later, but getting to Kanazawa, which usually took two hours, took us nine hours that day." Hiroyuki Ejiri's helplessness at the time mirrored that of many local residents.

When we returned to the Noto Peninsula five months after the earthquake, we saw ongoing infrastructure restoration projects along the way. However, upon entering the heavily damaged city of Wajima, we found many buildings still lying in ruins where they had collapsed. Wajima, situated next to the Sea of Japan, had once been a beautiful coastal city renowned for the Wajima Morning Market—one of Japan's three major morning markets and the city's most bustling and prosperous area. Tragically, the powerful earthquake triggered a fire that raged for 14 hours, destroying over 200 buildings in the market area. Addi-



# Tzu Chi's Aid for the Noto Peninsula Earthquake

- Tzu Chi offices in Japan
- Cash aid distribution areas



## Earthquake Overview:

A powerful earthquake struck the Noto Peninsula in Ishikawa Prefecture, Japan, at 4:10 p.m. on January 1, 2024. The Japan Meteorological Agency rated it as a magnitude **7.6**, with the epicenter near the city of Suzu. The quake resulted in **299** deaths, **3** people missing, and damage to **80,000** houses, with over **20,000** needing demolition.

## Tzu Chi's Aid:

**Hot Meals:** Provided at Anamizu General Hospital and Sawayaka Community Center Pluto from January 13 to 29 and February 16 to March 29, totaling **13,097** meals.

**Coffee Station:** Set up at Anamizu General Hospital starting February 16, offering free oolong tea, hot cocoa, and coffee to healthcare workers and quake-affected residents, creating a space for relaxation and conversation.

**Cash Aid:** Distributed to **11,302** households across six cities and towns in 27 distribution events, from May 17 to July 16.

•**Recipients:** Families whose homes were completely or partially destroyed by the quake and have members aged 65 or older.

•**Amounts:** Based on family size—130,000 yen (US\$910) for one person, 150,000 yen (US\$1,030) for two to three people, and 170,000 yen (US\$1,170) for four or more people.

**Tuition Aid:** On July 17, tuition aid was provided to 48 students at the Kanazawa Institute of Technology in Kanazawa.





tionally, more than 15,000 houses throughout the city were either completely or partially destroyed or damaged by the earthquake.

Wajima resident Kensei Sumi said that about 80 percent of the collapsed and damaged houses in the city had remained untouched. He also mentioned that clearing the ruins was expected to take two years, with rebuilding projected to take three to four years. “My house was marked as uninhabitable,” he said, “but staying in the evacuation center is very inconvenient. I still prefer my own home.”

### Pressing on

Wajima lacquerware, designated an important intangible cultural property by the Japanese government in 1977, is a traditional craft in which Wajima residents take great pride. Many shops and workshops specializing in this craft at the Wajima Morning Market were destroyed by the earthquake and its aftermath.

Lacquerware artist Sushii Tatsuya showed us his devastated workshop. This building was severely tilted, with damaged beams and pillars and a buckled floor. Materials for making lacquerware were scattered everywhere. The government’s red notice on the building indicated it was uninhabitable and had to be demolished.

“This workshop is where I built everything from the ground up,” he said. “It was created with all my heart and soul. It’s as important to me as my life. The Japanese phrase ‘*isshokenmei*’ [putting one’s whole heart into something] perfectly

**Roses bloom beautifully in June at a residence in Machino, Wajima. The garden remains lovely, but the owner who planted the flowers can no longer live in the damaged home.**

LIN LING-LI

captures my state of mind. If this place is demolished...” He choked up, unable to continue, his tears reflecting his profound attachment to his workshop and his sense of helplessness.

During our visit, we witnessed the plight of quake-stricken residents and their inexpressible suffering, yet also their resilience and warmth. Mushroom farmer Masaharu Takamori shared, “My house was deemed half-destroyed. The damage is significant, but I am more concerned about the elderly residents in the mountains. About 70 percent of the area is in a terrible state. The severity of the impact is such that you can’t find it in your heart to say ‘keep going’ to the people there... But still, everyone must keep going and move forward.” Despite his own challenges, his primary concern was for his fellow villagers.

Similarly, Katsuyoshi Shuden, a farmer from the town of Noto, prioritized his community. His farmland suffered extensive damage, with losses difficult to estimate. When we met to film how he was restoring his irrigation system, Mr. Shuden received a warm hug from Brother Hsieh. Shuden said, “Taiwan has recently experienced an earthquake too. Thank you for still coming to offer care to us.” He then took out a bag from the trunk of his car, containing three metal boxes with the





coins he had saved to help others. He donated the money to Tzu Chi.

We asked him about the most difficult challenge since the earthquake. With eyes moist and rimmed with red, he said, "I'm more concerned about the disappearance of our settlement than the damage I suffered. Our elderly population is large, as the younger generation has been moving away. The earthquake has worsened this situation, and many people feel emotionally empty."

Every interviewee we met was focused on their fellow villagers, not themselves. They are striving to rebuild with their own strength, not just for themselves but for the entire community, supporting each other. This resilience and unique warmth define the spirit of the Noto Peninsula.

Noto has a way of winning people's hearts, and it's easy to become emotionally attached. The

**The Noto Peninsula is known for its traditional crafts: Suzu pottery (left, photo by Lin Jian-li) and Wajima lacquerware (below, photo by Teng Chih-ming).**







pure, kind, and sincere people of Noto continually inspire me to think about how we could further support their recovery.

### Grateful for this land and its people

Brother Hsieh often reminded us during our visits to Noto, partly to motivate himself, “Tzu Chi’s new international disaster relief model may not succeed; you might end up recording a failed process.” On one occasion, resting his right hand on his chin and frowning, he said, “The wisdom of Noto’s satoyama and satoumi has been passed down through generations, with sustainability woven into their way of life. If we can help farmers here achieve international sustainability certification and increase the value of their rice during their recovery, that would be wonderful.”

When Wajima lacquerware artists expressed concerns that their centuries-old craft might disappear, Brother Hsieh wondered, “Is there a public welfare model that could help these artists restart their workshops?” After learning that the earthquake had damaged all the kilns used by Suzu pottery artists, affecting the livelihoods of 54 people, he asked, “Let’s think together. Is there any way to let more Taiwanese people know about Suzu pottery?”

Frankly, I’m not entirely sure what Tzu Chi’s new international disaster relief model entails. What I do know is that before the interviews, we thoroughly researched the life and culture of the Noto Peninsula. During the interviews, we visited town after town and village after village, explored the lives of the locals, and learned their true needs. Only then could we discuss effective ways to sup-

**Mushroom farmer Masaharu Takamori is concerned about how the older people in the mountains will rebuild their lives after the earthquake.** JESSICA YANG

port their recovery and prosperity.

As Tzu Chi approaches its 60th anniversary, we remain committed to our mission of relieving suffering and giving joy, whether through charity or international disaster relief. As I understand it, the “new model” involves aligning with international trends and global sustainability while standing together with the locals and developing solutions collaboratively.

Our documenting team first visited the Noto Peninsula in late April this year. Since then, we have made three trips totaling over 60 days. Besides developing an attachment to this land, I feel as though we are deeply loved by it as well. Whenever I needed materials and stories, the locals would arrange them for me, making me profoundly grateful for this land and its people.

As I reviewed footage and wrote scripts in the early mornings, I reflected on how well the beautiful and peaceful Noto treats its people, and how the people, in turn, love and respect the land. Even when natural disasters cause severe damage and hardships, the resilience of both the land and its people shines through. The community’s mutual support and trust, combined with their kindness, create a powerful force for good.

Natural disasters will only increase in the future, but I believe that maintaining this spirit of kindness and resilience will help everyone, no matter where they are, face and overcome their challenges. ❀



# A Photographer's Reflection

## Capturing Tzu Chi's Work in Bodh Gaya, India

**Text and photos by Hsiao Yiu-hwa**

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

*The ophthalmologist said that my eye condition following my stay in Bodh Gaya was due to prolonged UV exposure. If I experienced that after only a month, I couldn't help but wonder how the locals and elderly Tzu Chi volunteers who stay there for months manage to cope.*



While in India, *Tzu Chi Monthly* photographer Hsiao Yiu-hwa (蕭耀華) adapted to local ways, which helped him overcome language and cultural barriers and connect with the local people.

YONG MUN FEI



In the 1980s, a classmate gave me a translated novel as a gift when I graduated from university: *Siddhartha* by the German author Hermann Hesse. I flipped through a few pages at the time but couldn't grasp its meaning. I moved several times over the years, and the book was eventually lost.

Fast forward to early March 2024, when I traveled to Bodh Gaya, India, on official business. While Bodh Gaya might be unfamiliar to some people, it is a sacred site for Buddhists. More than 2,500 years ago, Prince Siddhartha attained enlightenment there and became the Buddha. Today, Buddhist organizations from around the world have established temples and centers at this holy site. Tzu Chi set up a branch office there in 2023.

My role in India as a photographer for *Tzu Chi Monthly* was to document the work of Tzu Chi volunteers. The photography assignment was for a month in the spring of 2024, extending throughout March. Toward the end of the assignment, I started experiencing discomfort in my right eye. I noticed a small white spot between my iris and

the white of my eye, which caused irritation every time I blinked. I sought help at a hospital after returning to Taiwan, where an ophthalmologist diagnosed me with pterygium. She explained that it is a condition caused by prolonged exposure to intense ultraviolet rays, a common eye ailment for people living in tropical regions.

The doctor told me that pterygium is irreversible. She said that medication may reduce inflammation and prevent its worsening, with surgery as a last resort if it progresses, but there would be no guarantee it wouldn't recur. The doctor prescribed eye drops for a week and told me that if the white spot didn't interfere with my vision,

**Tzu Chi volunteers from Singapore and Malaysia have been taking turns being stationed in Bodh Gaya since March 2023 and engaging in philanthropic work. On the eve of the anniversary of their mission there, they make a vow in front of the Mahabodhi Temple, the very site where the Buddha attained enlightenment, to persist in their efforts for the local needy.**







there was no need for further treatment; I could simply live with it.

With a bottle of eye drops in hand, I asked myself on my way home: *If I could develop this condition in just a month, how do the locals in India, who have lived there all their lives, manage?* My curiosity led me to review the tens of thousands of photos I had taken in the country.

### **A hidden tenderness**

As I examined the images, I noticed that many locals displayed signs of various ailments. Common issues included eye diseases like cataracts and pterygium, as well as different degrees of physical disabilities and malnutrition. These conditions were most evident at the entrances to Buddhist temples and shrines, where afflicted individuals gathered to seek alms from pilgrims and tourists. The disabilities and low social status of such individuals lead them to seek assistance

from Buddhists, whom they believe to be compassionate and charitable.

I visited Buddhist sites many times during my month-long stay in India and often encountered people begging there. My friends had repeatedly advised me against giving alms to them, emphasizing that true compassion requires wisdom and that small, random acts of charity would not resolve their problems. I followed their advice, but one morning, after a mission on Vulture Peak in Rajgir, a withered woman and a blind young man approached my car window. Her humble expression, eyes pleading for help, and the way she reached out with her thin, dry hands deeply affected me.

In that instant, I was reminded of a photograph by American photographer Steve McCurry, shot from inside his car: a woman standing outside his car door with a child in her arm, in the rain, her hand touching the window, seeking a





**In the early morning light, a severely disabled child lies on a simple handmade wooden cart in front of the Mahabodhi Temple in Bodh Gaya, waiting for the generosity of passersby. Making a living is not easy, but the challenges for disabled individuals are even greater.**

**In Gaya's city center, electric rickshaws, motor scooters, cargo-laden three-wheelers, and a steady stream of pedestrians navigate the crowded streets, creating a lively scene that vividly depicts the challenges of daily life.**

small act of kindness from those inside.

I quickly reached into my pocket, hoping to find something to offer the woman at my car window and capture a genuine moment that reflected the reality of life for those at the bottom of society. However, as I was about to act, the driver started the car. Despite my urgent calls to stop, the car began to move. I only had time to quickly hand over a small token of my sympathy through the window. The woman thanked me and, guiding the blind man, slowly walked away. My chance to capture that moment with my camera was lost.

Although I had missed the chance to take a good photograph, the brief encounter revealed to me a hidden tenderness within myself that I had not previously recognized.

### **Working to make a difference**

According to Buddhist scriptures, when Prince Siddhartha ventured outside his palace

walls, he encountered an elderly individual, a sick person, a corpse, and a holy man. Deeply troubled by the hardships caused by aging, illness, death, and other afflictions, he began contemplating the path to liberation from these sufferings. After much contemplation without success, he left his home one moonlit night, riding a horse to seek the way. Eventually, he reached enlightenment in Bodh Gaya.

Living in modern times, it is impossible to fully grasp the human sufferings of that era. However, during my month-long stay in the place where the Buddha achieved enlightenment, I observed and experienced many aspects of life that led me to speculate that the conditions for people living at the bottom of society might be nearly the same since then, over 2,500 years ago. For them, there is still much room for improvement in many aspects of life. In other words, it is a region where Tzu Chi can truly make a difference.



Tzu Chi covered the cost of 10,000 rupees (US\$120) for Soni Pravin's eye surgery, easing her eye pain. In the pictures, Tzu Chi volunteers are shown accompanying her for a follow-up visit and consulting with the eye specialist to ensure she receives the best possible care after surgery.



The Tzu Chi mission in Bodh Gaya is primarily carried out by volunteers from Singapore and Malaysia. This group of dedicated volunteers averages around 50 years old, with a few being over 70. They stay for varying lengths of time, ranging from one to five months, covering the cost of their own food and lodging. Some return to Singapore or Malaysia, or visit neighboring Nepal when their Indian visas expire, only to come back and continue their diligent work.

These volunteers visit local villages to promote public health, provide health checkups, and discourage alcohol consumption. They reach out to impoverished households, offering care and support, and build Great Love Houses for those in need. They also visit schools to assess educational

needs and provide assistance where they can. Additionally, they set up sewing, computer, and English classes, striving to teach marketable skills and change the long-term culture of dependency among disadvantaged local groups.

### Joy and fulfillment

I followed the Tzu Chi volunteers every day as they carried out their mission. We accompanied patients with eye conditions to their medical appointments, helped disabled individuals find suitable walking aids, checked on the progress of the Great Love Houses, visited schools to learn about local students' learning conditions, and went on pilgrimages to Buddhist heritage sites.





After a month in India, I returned to Taiwan and was diagnosed with pterygium. Reflecting on my eye problem, I couldn't help but wonder how the older volunteers, who had stayed there for much longer, were managing.

A friend once asked me why Tzu Chi volunteers choose to work in such challenging places, doing tough work that doesn't easily yield obvious results. I'm not a volunteer myself, so I can't speak for them, but having spent half a century in the professional world, I found my experience working alongside them to be deeply rewarding. Their efforts are not driven by fame, profit, or the need to make a living. Instead, they come together with a shared commitment to selfless service. Their religious faith gives them a strong sense of

purpose, making their work fulfilling and joyful.

Moreover, their work is not just a superficial gesture but provides essential aid for those in genuine need. The people they help truly require support, and their selfless dedication is met with heartfelt gratitude. As a result, those they assist come to see them as family. This kind of relationship and feeling is something you can only truly understand by being a part of it.

The Tzu Chi volunteers in Bodh Gaya are incredibly fortunate. This is where the Buddha attained enlightenment and where Buddhism began. Continuing the compassionate spirit of Buddhism in such a historically significant place is a deeply meaningful experience, more so than anywhere else. Wouldn't you agree? ❀



1~5

# 家庭醫學部

Dept. of Family Medicine

診

門診健檢中心

Outpatient Health Examination Unit

子宮頸抹片快速門診

Pap Smear Clinic





# Saving Lives, Healing the Earth

## The Story of Dr. Lin Ming-nan

**By Wang Ming-meng**

Edited and translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Photos by Huang Xiao-zhe

*From his work in rural Taiwan to international conferences, Vice-Superintendent Dr. Lin Ming-nan of Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital embodies a deep commitment to preventive medicine and environmental stewardship.*

“Get a thoracotomy kit from the OR!” barked the attending physician, his voice filled with urgency as he fought to save the gravely wounded patient on the ER gurney.

Lin Ming-nan (林名男) and another intern were standing nearby, staring wide-eyed at the young man on the gurney, brutally stabbed in the back with a large chisel. He was barely registering a blood pressure.

Once the thoracotomy kit was brought in, the attending physician expertly used the rib spreader to open the patient’s rib cage, but no blood spurted out; the patient had already lost too much. Faced with both a collapsed lung and internal bleeding, the doctor immediately initiated a transfusion of four units of blood. He inserted a transfusion line and squeezed a blood bag while ordering, “Intern, start compressions!” Lin Ming-nan began internal cardiac massage on the patient, whose heart had stopped by this point.

The dramatic scene above transpired in 1989, the third year of operation for Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital in eastern Taiwan. Lin Ming-nan, a medical student about to enter his seventh year at National Taiwan University (NTU), northern Taiwan, was interning at the hospital as part of a collaboration program between NTU Hospital and

Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital. At 23 years of age and only a week into his internship, he was thrown into the crucible of a life-and-death struggle.

Despite the medical team’s best efforts, the severely wounded young man ultimately succumbed to his injuries. But then something remarkable occurred: instead of blaming the team, the man’s family showed understanding and expressed gratitude for the team’s selfless dedication in their valiant fight to save their loved one. This incident left a deep impression on Lin: “A good doctor will never give up on a patient without a fight; he will treat them as family and do everything possible to save them until the very end.”

### **A doctor’s journey**

Lin Ming-nan was born in 1965 in Jiali Township, southern Taiwan. The simplicity of rural life shaped his gentle and kind nature. In high school, he was captivated by the mysteries of life after reading a college biology textbook recommended by his teacher. This prompted him to set his sights on medical school. His desire to care for remote rural communities led him to choose family medicine. Having grown up in a rural area, he understood the urgent need for health education and medical care in such communities.



**Dr. Lin Ming-nan conducts a patient examination with an intern observing. Lin treats patients with warmth and generously mentors intern doctors.**

After being admitted to NTU's College of Medicine, Lin joined and became involved in a service club. His experiences leading summer and winter camps for underserved communities influenced his decision to serve in the rural Pingxi Township, northern Taiwan, after completing his residency training.

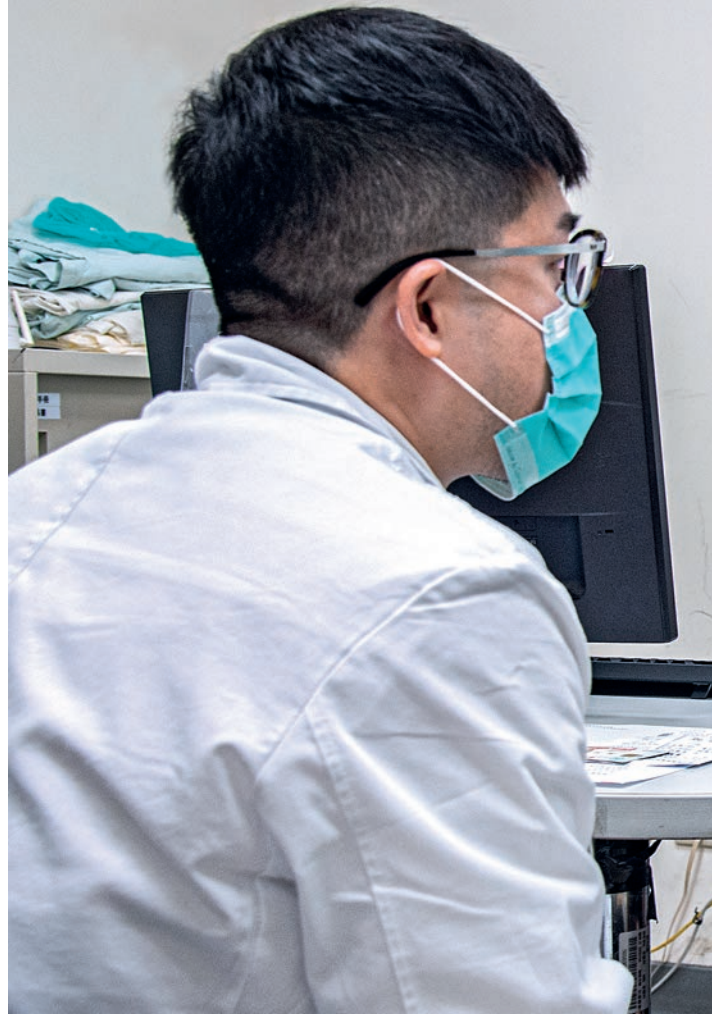
Following his graduation from medical school and then a three-year residency in family medicine, he began working at the public health center in Pingxi. At the time, in 1995, he was the only doctor in Pingxi, providing care to 6,685 registered residents. To ease access to care, he not only saw patients in the clinic but also made house calls.

Lin dedicated himself fully to his work but sometimes felt frustrated and powerless. He deeply sympathized with the elderly villagers suffering from pneumoconiosis, a result of their past work as coal miners. Many of these patients couldn't or wouldn't pay 50,000 Taiwanese dollars (US\$1,670) for an oxygen concentrator to ease their suffering, making the end of their lives difficult and painful.

Determined to make a difference, he dedicated a significant amount of his time to health education, earnestly advising these patients to keep an oxygen tank at home. With the help of his wife, Chu qiu-hua (褚秋華), a social worker, he collected nearly 20 medical oxygen concentrators to assist patients with end-stage pneumoconiosis.

His three years of experience in Pingxi steered him toward health promotion. But the seeds for his lifelong commitment to this field really were sown during his fifth year of medical school, when his professor highlighted that while Taiwan had no shortage of clinicians treating patients, there was a lack of doctors focused on preventive medicine and health promotion.

Lin's father was diagnosed with terminal lung cancer during Lin's graduate studies in preventive medicine at NTU. Despite his professor's advice to stay in school, Lin returned home to care for his father. Sadly, the cancer spread to his brain and he passed away at the age of 58. During this period, Lin worked at Sinlau Christian Hospital and served as the director of the hospital's Community Health Center, fulfilling his wish to care for his fellow townspeople.



### **Joining Tzu Chi**

In 2005, with the support of his family, Lin Ming-nan began his career at Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital in Chiayi, southern Taiwan. But his connection to Tzu Chi began even before his internship at Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital. In the 1980s, when the hospital was under construction, a Tzu Chi volunteer who was a neighbor approached Lin's mother for donations. After discussing it with her husband, she decided to forgo salon visits and contribute 400 Taiwanese dollars (US\$13) every month to support the hospital's construction and the foundation's other work.

During one of Dharma Master Cheng Yen's visits to Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital, Lin, a newly appointed attending physician, introduced himself and mentioned that his mother had become a Tzu Chi donating member during the construction of Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital and that both his wife and father-in-law were Tzu Chi volunteers. Upon hearing this, the Master remarked, "You have a deep karmic connection with Tzu Chi; make sure to cherish it!"





The Master's words deeply resonated with Lin Ming-nan, driving him to enroll in volunteer training to gain a deeper understanding of Tzu Chi's work. He was particularly moved by the testimony of Luo Ming-hsien (羅明憲), a seasoned volunteer who frequently participated in the foundation's international disaster relief efforts. During a training session, Luo recounted his 2002 experience in war-torn Afghanistan, where Tzu Chi was providing aid in collaboration with Knightsbridge International. Luo had encountered a five-year-old orphan who, having lost both parents, was now the head of his household and had brought his younger siblings to receive supplies. Lin's heart ached at such stories of hardship, but he was equally inspired by the love and dedication of those involved in humanitarian missions. These experiences deepened his empathy for those in need and drew him closer to Master Cheng Yen's compassionate vision to relieve the world's suffering.

Lin also drew inspiration from the selfless dedication of his medical predecessors, particularly

Dr. Lin Chin-lon (林俊龍), the first superintendent of Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital. Lin Chin-lon had built a distinguished career in the United States as the first Asian superintendent at the Northridge Hospital Medical Center in Los Angeles. However, in 1995, after learning of Master Cheng Yen's concerns about the challenges of retaining doctors at Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital, located in a relatively remote part of Taiwan, he made the choice to return to Taiwan earlier than planned. Although he had intended to join Tzu Chi after retirement, he decided to leave his successful 25-year medical career behind to support the foundation's mission. Witnessing such devotion further reinforced Lin Ming-nan's own resolve to contribute meaningfully to the foundation's work.

In 2006, Lin Ming-nan participated in Tzu Chi's relief efforts following an earthquake in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. There, he observed the orderly manner in which Tzu Chi conducted distributions and saw how volunteers bowed respectfully at a 90-degree angle to aid recipients while handing out supplies. Afterwards, they





meticulously restored the venue and guided the locals in sorting recyclables and engaging in environmental protection. These details left a lasting impression on him.

During a free clinic in a remote area during that relief mission, an amusing incident occurred. When Lin asked a local resident about her discomfort and how he could assist, she shyly smiled and, through a translator, replied, “My body is fine. I just wanted to see what a doctor looks like. I’ve never seen one in my life!”

### **Be the difference**

Dr. Lin Chin-lon, now the CEO of Tzu Chi’s medical mission, was the superintendent of Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital when Lin Ming-nan first joined. He asked Lin Ming-nan at that time to assist with community health screenings, which provided Lin the opportunity to apply his expertise in preventive medicine and fully embrace his ideals.

Lin recalled attending the annual International Conference on Health Promoting Hospitals and Health Services in Europe in 2007. Discussions at the conference emphasized that while hospitals are traditionally viewed as places for treating illness, they should also align with the World Health Organization’s (WHO) 1986 call for hospitals to

**Lin interacts with a young patient at a Tzu Chi free clinic in Nepal, held in response to the devastating earthquake in 2015.**

YE JIN-HONG

promote health. This perspective corresponded with Dr. Lin Chin-lon’s ideals for preventive medicine and echoed the ancient Chinese medical text *Huangdi Neijing*, which states, “The superior doctor prevents disease, the mediocre doctor attends to impending disease, and the inferior doctor treats actual disease.” The goal is not only to help the public prevent illness but also to create a healthcare environment that minimizes the occurrence of disease.

Back then, Lin Chin-lon also assigned Lin Ming-nan the task of researching the link between vegetarianism and health. Leading by example, Lin Ming-nan became a vegetarian. He also took on the role of president of the Taiwan Vegetarian Nutrition Society. This laid a solid foundation for him to promote vegetarianism on behalf of Tzu Chi at international platforms, such as the United Nations Climate Change Conference (known as COP, short for Conference of the Parties).

Lin Ming-nan has attended six UN Climate Change Conferences over the years. In 2015, just





two weeks before the Paris summit (COP21), a terrorist attack struck Paris, but not even that could deter him, and he attended anyway. He was the only hospital representative from Taiwan invited to attend. During a side meeting, he shared the achievements of Tzu Chi's environmental mission, which began in 1990 in response to Master Cheng Yen's call to engage in recycling. Lin also presented on the relationship between vegetarianism and the environment, explaining how dietary habits impact climate change and highlighting Tzu Chi's efforts to promote vegetarianism and healthy eating. "Change the world by starting with your diet!" he urged.

He remembers being deeply moved when the Master's portrait appeared on the big screen during his presentation at the COP. He knew that each presentation could inspire more people to recognize the benefits of vegetarianism and help extend Tzu Chi's spirit to a wider audience. Since joining the foundation, Lin has steadfastly brought Tzu Chi's love and care for Mother Earth to the international stage, allowing the world to witness Master Cheng Yen's and the foundation's efforts in this respect.

Two key concepts from Lin Ming-nan's international speeches have struck a chord with many.

**Lin sees an elderly patient in rural Cambodia in March 2019.**

ZHUO XIU-YIN

The first, "one action, two effects," underscores that a vegetarian diet benefits both personal health and the environment. While many recognize the health benefits of a vegetarian diet, such a diet also contributes to environmental health by reducing methane emissions from meat production, which exacerbate the greenhouse effect. Lin is convinced that promoting this concept is crucial, as greater understanding leads to a larger collective impact.

The second concept is derived from the *Sutra of Innumerable Meanings*, which describes how from one seed, hundreds of thousands grow, and from each of those, hundreds of thousands more arise, continuing infinitely. Lin explains that Master Cheng Yen represents the "one" who brings everyone together in Tzu Chi. "Without that initial 'one,' there would be no 'us' willing to contribute to slowing global warming," he said. "Start with yourself; commit to one vegetarian meal a day or one vegetarian day a week. Tzu Chi's strength is Buddhism in action, but it all begins with that 'one.'" Lin Ming-nan's mission is to





inspire others to become that “one,” fostering infinite positive impact from a single source.

### Guarding life, health, and love

Once a sprawling expanse of sugarcane fields, Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital has, through the dedicated efforts of its staff, become an international benchmark for Health Promoting Hospitals over the past two decades. Since 2006, the hospital has participated in the International Conference on Health Promoting Hospitals and Health Services. In 2012, it was honored with the inaugural Outstanding Fulfillment of WHO Health Promoting Hospital Standards award.

The hospital’s achievements extend beyond this recognition. In 2020, it received an award from Taiwan’s Health Promotion Administration for its global advocacy of green hospital practices. In 2022, Lin Ming-nan represented the hospital at the 45th World Hospital Congress in Dubai, where he received the bronze award in the Ashikaga-Nikken Excellence Award for Green Hospitals. Notably, Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital was also the first in Taiwan to pledge its commitment to the UN’s 2050 net-zero emissions goal.

Lin Ming-nan has been a key contributor in

**Lin has long shared his research on vegetarianism at international events. He is pictured here speaking on the topic at the Green Hospitals Asian Conference held in Singapore in 2019.** ZENG MEI-ZHEN

these accomplishments. In recognition of his contributions to health promotion and environmental sustainability, he was honored in 2023 with the Taiwan Medical Contribution Award by the Taiwan Medical Association. Lin attributed the award to the collective efforts of the hospital staff, emphasizing, “We are not just disease treaters; we are healthcare professionals committed to protecting life, health, and love.”

From the early stages of his career, Lin Ming-nan has been committed to preventive medicine, gradually expanding his mission to include vegetarianism and environmental stewardship. Just as he fought to save that young man in the ER all those years ago, Dr. Lin continues to fight—now on a global stage—to protect life, health, and the environment. His unwavering dedication reflects Master Cheng Yen’s compassionate vow to safeguard both life and the Earth, guiding his ongoing journey and impact.



# New Perspectives, New Understandings

**By Guo Cai-xi**

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Photo by Yang Xiu-li

*Does “new” have to mean something never used before? A four-year-old’s surprising wisdom sheds light on how our perspectives shape our reality.*

As my two children continue to grow, I’ve noticed that many of their childhood clothes no longer fit them. Sorting through their wardrobe one day, I picked out items that were still in great condition, about 80 to 90 percent new. After washing and drying them, I took photos and organized them by season and size. Then, I reached out to various messaging groups to see if anyone wanted these clothes, hoping to extend their lifespan.

As I looked at the clothes, a charming anecdote involving my youngest daughter when she was four years old came to mind. One day, when we were sorting through clothes for the season, I said to her, “Xiao-xi, you end up wearing your sister’s

hand-me-downs most of the time. I sometimes feel a little guilty because I don’t often buy you new clothes.” In response, she said, “But the clothes I’ve never worn are new to me!” Her spontaneous response caught me by surprise, brought me joy, and taught me a valuable lesson.

My daughter’s response prompted me to reconsider the definitions of “new” and “old.” It reminded me that things can be viewed from different perspectives. As Dharma Master Cheng Yen says, “If we look at a chipped cup from another angle, it is still round.” Let’s always remember that by shifting our perspective we possess the ability to shape a fresh reality for both ourselves and those around us. ❊





# The JING SIA Illustrated APHORISMS



## The Buddha says:

Whoever sees the Dharma, sees me.  
Whoever has not seen the Dharma, cannot see me.  
Even if he were gripping my robe,  
he still would not be able to see me.

Some people think that so long as they read the sutras, the Buddha will protect them from all trouble. They're wrong. Living beings are often confused and go the wrong way.

The Buddha showed us the right direction in life. We should diligently practice what he taught us. That is real Buddhism.



I can hardly believe that my younger brother passed away so quickly. I just can't accept that it has really happened.

Dharma Master Cheng Yen: "When each of us has played our role on the stage of life, we must step off. Those still onstage must continue to play their roles as best they can. If we do the best we can while we are alive, then our love will remain even after we have left this world."

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



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**Kansas**  
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*A simple heart purifies life; a complicated mind corrupts it.*  
—Dharma Master Cheng Yen

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