

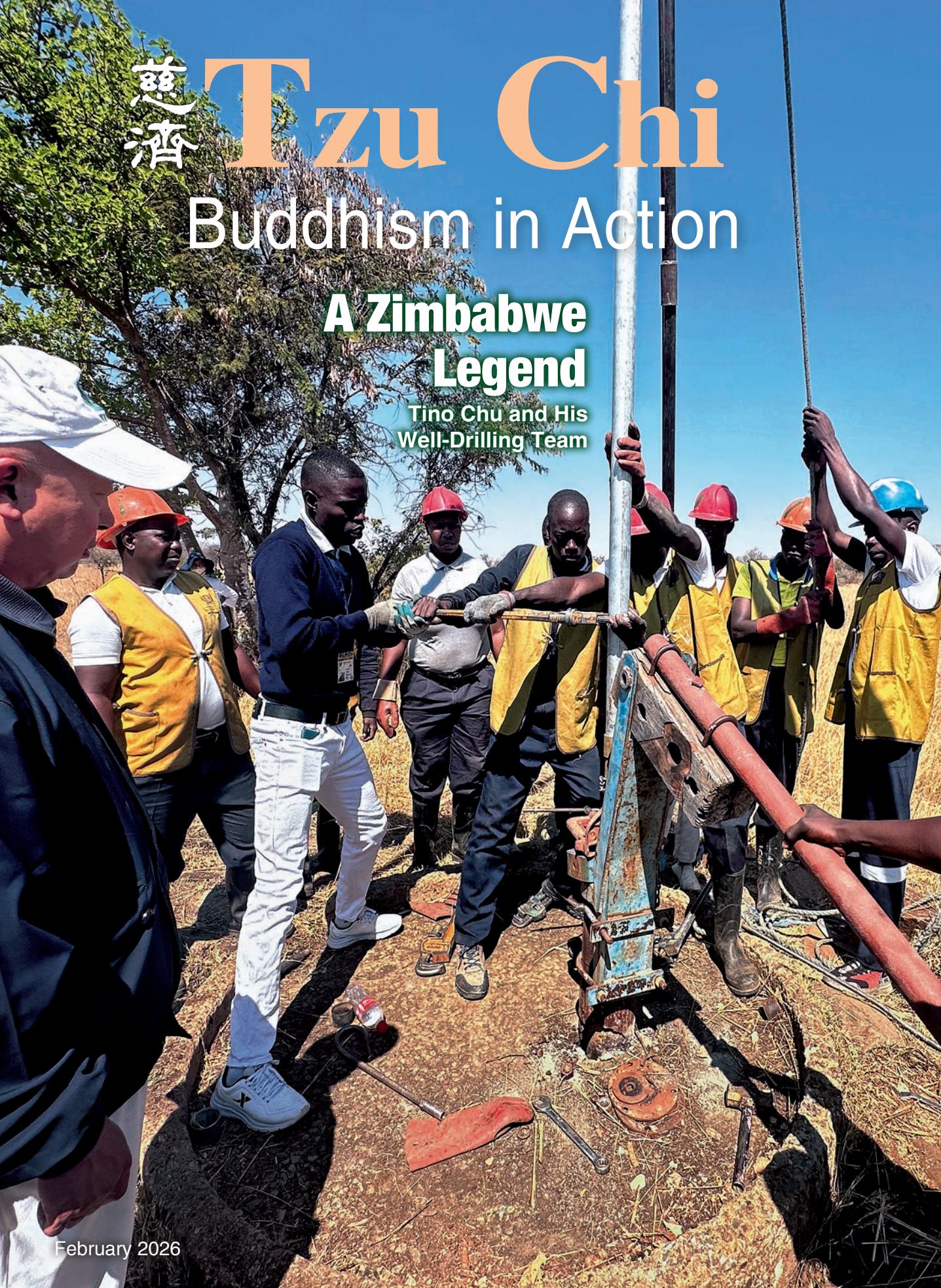
慈濟

Tzu Chi

Buddhism in Action

A Zimbabwe Legend

Tino Chu and His
Well-Drilling Team





**Every new volunteer strengthens Tzu Chi's mission, expanding
the circle of care and spreading love to ever more corners of need.**

HUANG XIAO-ZHE

Rejoicing in New Bodhisattvas

Translated by Teresa Chang

This year, once again, our annual volunteer certification and year-end blessing ceremonies brought many members of our Tzu Chi family to Taiwan. Some traveled through several countries, taking multiple connecting flights, to be here for the special moment of receiving their certification. Seeing everyone sincerely vow to become living bodhisattvas made the occasions feel especially precious. As I attached each badge to their chest, blessings arose from deep within my heart—blessings I hope will accompany them across lifetimes.

I also presented each person with a *fuhui hongbao* (“red envelope of blessings and wisdom”). The hongbao carries profound meaning. When recipients see it, they are reminded that it came from my hands and that the mission entrusted to them is to walk the Bodhisattva Path, inspiring them to live with purpose and meaning.

The birth of more real-life bodhisattvas is always a cause for great joy, as it means more hands to help those in need and spread love. I hope all my disciples carry forward the mission of working for Buddhism and for all living beings. Together, we can shoulder the responsibility of fostering happiness and harmony in our world.

To receive certification, a person undergoes several years of training. Among other things, they learn to conduct themselves mindfully in all aspects of daily life—walking, sitting, speaking, and eating—and to interact with others harmoniously. They learn the importance of using gentle and kind words. All of this helps them uphold the image of a Tzu Chi volunteer.

Mindfulness is essential in everything we do. Likewise, I constantly remind myself to speak mindfully. During our volunteer certification and year-end blessing ceremonies, some participants from other countries wear earphones to listen to real-time translations. I intentionally speak slowly so that interpreters can hear clearly and translate accurately. I always consider whether my words can reach the hearts and minds of listeners—without that con-

nection, there is no inspiration, and without inspiration, there can be no action.

Seeing volunteers come from faraway places to Taiwan with such vitality to receive their certification shows me how strong their faith is. During training, they accompany senior volunteers on home visits to the needy, witnessing firsthand the depths of poverty and suffering. Such experiences reveal a simple truth: Many people need help, and those who have the capacity to help are blessed.

I am grateful to the new bodhisattvas for honoring me with their trust and for choosing to join Tzu Chi. I am equally grateful to our senior volunteers for guiding and supporting these new bodhisattvas and for sharing how they became part of the Tzu Chi family, taking up the Buddha’s mission and carrying forward Tzu Chi’s work. Every experience they share is a living expression of the Dharma.

“Tzu” means love, and “Chi” means giving. Together, they express the spirit of compassionately relieving the suffering of all living beings. Whenever a disaster strikes, local volunteers first check on one another’s safety, then assess the situation and determine what help is needed. Some volunteers are able to go directly to the front lines to assist, while others, though unable to go, channel their compassion into encouraging people to donate and help. Just as countless drops of water form a vast ocean, every act of kindness converges to provide powerful support for disaster-stricken communities.

As climate change worsens and disasters become more frequent, we must understand that what truly matters is cultivating compassionate hearts. When each person nurtures kindness and acts for the common good, the collective goodness we generate can help mitigate disasters. Never think you are powerless to make a difference. When we combine our strengths, much can be accomplished.

It is our mission and responsibility to alleviate suffering. That is why I feel deep gratitude every year during our volunteer certification ceremonies—each new volunteer adds strength to the global force of love that transforms lives.



Tzu Chi

Bimonthly

February 2026



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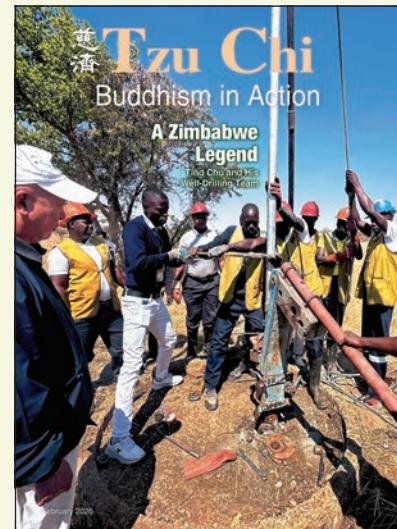
Tzu Chi's educational support helps young people stay grounded, moti-

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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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Wang Tuan-cheng, CEO

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Tzu Chi Event Highlights

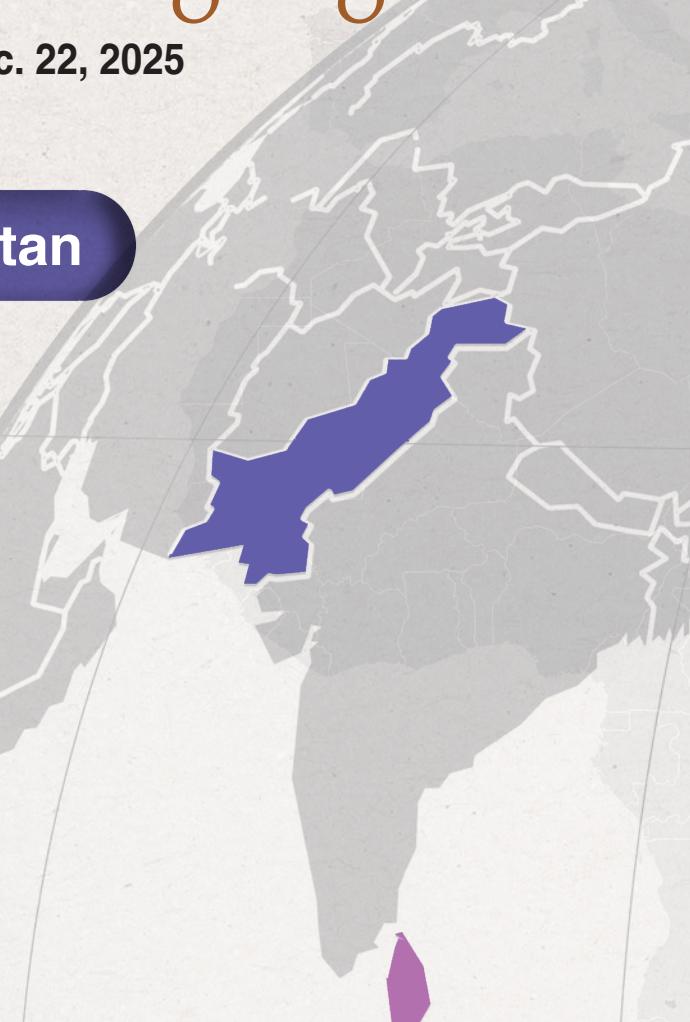
Oct. 18 to Dec. 22, 2025



Pakistan

- Severe flooding caused by Pakistan's particularly strong monsoon season, which began in late June, claimed over a thousand lives. Some areas still had not recovered as of November. Following its 2022 relief efforts, Tzu Chi partnered again with local organizations to provide aid, helping 7,500 households, totaling 52,500 people.

In this latest effort, Tzu Chi procured 6,000 relief packages, which were distributed by November 29 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa through the We Care Foundation and the Al-Madinah Islamic Research Center. Another 1,500 food and daily necessities packages were purchased by the Shirkat Gah Women's Resource Centre and distributed in Punjab by December 16.



Sri Lanka

- Tropical Cyclone Ditwah struck Sri Lanka in late November, damaging over 100,000 homes and affecting 1.7 million people. Tzu Chi provided 1,800 meals in Hambantota and helped vulnerable households in Colombo with cleanup efforts. In Homagama Division, Colombo, Tzu Chi distributed a one-and-a-half-month supply of food and daily necessities to 1,438 households. Additional distributions are planned, with over 20,000 people expected to benefit.

Taiwan



- In November, a Tzu Chi University team distinguished itself at the 77th iENA inventors' fair in Nuremberg, Germany, competing against more than 540 entries from around the world. The team earned two gold medals, one silver, and a special award. Their winning innovations included the Portable Power-Free Backwash Water Purifier and two medical tools: the Smart Restraint Device and the Multi-Point Medical Tubing Fixation and Adjustment Device.

Vietnam



- Typhoons Bualoi and Matmo struck Vietnam between late September and early October. After coordinating with local authorities, Tzu Chi volunteers surveyed affected areas. On October 19, they distributed a thousand bags of rice and a thousand bottles of cooking oil to households in Thái Nguyên Province.

Continuing their relief efforts, Tzu Chi Vietnam provided a thousand scholarships across five schools in Nghệ An Province from November 7 to 9, along with additional school supplies for some students. Twenty families in the province also received assistance for housing reconstruction, with 70 million Vietnamese dong (US\$2,660) provided per household.



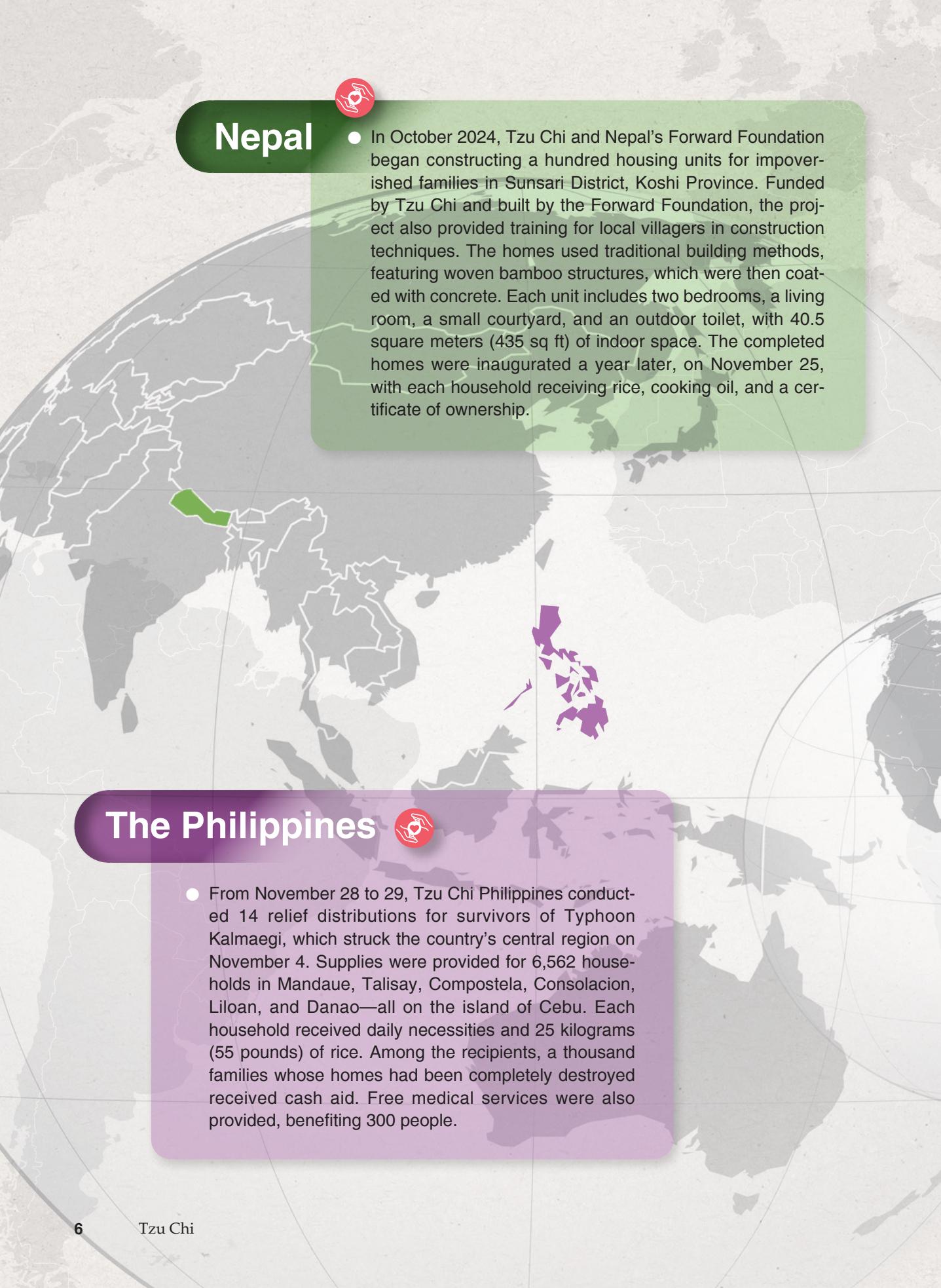
Charity



Medicine



Education



Nepal

- In October 2024, Tzu Chi and Nepal's Forward Foundation began constructing a hundred housing units for impoverished families in Sunsari District, Koshi Province. Funded by Tzu Chi and built by the Forward Foundation, the project also provided training for local villagers in construction techniques. The homes used traditional building methods, featuring woven bamboo structures, which were then coated with concrete. Each unit includes two bedrooms, a living room, a small courtyard, and an outdoor toilet, with 40.5 square meters (435 sq ft) of indoor space. The completed homes were inaugurated a year later, on November 25, with each household receiving rice, cooking oil, and a certificate of ownership.

The Philippines

- From November 28 to 29, Tzu Chi Philippines conducted 14 relief distributions for survivors of Typhoon Kalmaegi, which struck the country's central region on November 4. Supplies were provided for 6,562 households in Mandaue, Talisay, Compostela, Consolacion, Liloan, and Danao—all on the island of Cebu. Each household received daily necessities and 25 kilograms (55 pounds) of rice. Among the recipients, a thousand families whose homes had been completely destroyed received cash aid. Free medical services were also provided, benefiting 300 people.



Türkiye

- Tzu Chi Türkiye conducted 19 winter distributions at El Menahil International School from November 7 to 10. The events provided financial support to Syrian families and low-income Turkish households, while also raising funds to aid people in Gaza.



Eswatini

- On October 25, Tzu Chi held a free clinic in Lobamba, offering services such as diabetes and breast cancer screenings, Pap smears, and HIV testing. The event also provided physical therapy, nutritional assessments, medical consultations, and medications. Services were provided for more than 650 patients, including 120 children.



Dominican Republic

- Hurricane Melissa hit the Caribbean in late October. In Las Colinas, Baní, southern Dominican Republic, heavy rain and upstream land development sent mud into 215 homes, damaging furniture and appliances. Tzu Chi volunteers from Santo Domingo arrived on October 30 to assess the damage and compile recipient lists. Shopping vouchers were distributed to 214 households on November 23.



Brazil

- A powerful tornado struck Rio Bonito do Iguaçu in Paraná in early November, partially or completely destroying about 90 percent of homes. Tzu Chi volunteers from neighboring Paraguay, working with the Brazilian fire department, provided six tons of supplies to assist 400 families.



Thailand Southern Flooding

- ▶ **Disaster:** Continuous torrential rain triggered severe flooding in southern Thailand beginning November 26.
- ▶ **Deaths:** 181
- ▶ **Impact:** Over three million people across ten provinces
- ▶ **Tzu Chi Response:** Distribution of medicines, daily essentials, and cleaning supplies to 3,000 households



Sri Lanka Cyclone Ditwah Flooding

- ▶ **Disaster:** Monsoon rains, compounded by Cyclone Ditwah in late November, caused the country's worst flooding since the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami.
- ▶ **Deaths:** 643
- ▶ **Impact:** 1.7 million people; over 100,000 homes damaged
- ▶ **Tzu Chi Response:** Provision of hot meals and relief supplies; assistance with cleanup efforts

Cyclone Ditwah

Bay of Bengal

South China Sea

Cyclone Senyar

Strait of Malacca



Indonesia Sumatra Flood Disaster

- ▶ **Disaster:** Extreme rainfall, intensified by Cyclone Senyar in late November, triggered deadly flash floods and landslides across three northern Sumatran provinces.
- ▶ **Deaths:** 1,090
- ▶ **Impact:** 3.3 million people; 186 missing; 7,000 injured; more than 510,000 evacuated
- ▶ **Tzu Chi Response:** Establishment of communal kitchens and shelters; distribution of hot meals and relief supplies; free medical services; reconstruction of permanent housing

Relief Efforts for Hong Kong and Asian Flood Disasters

In the Wake of Fire and Floods

Compiled by *Tzu Chi Monthly* editorial staff

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

As the Level 5 blaze at Hong Kong's Wang Fuk Court housing complex shocked the world, several Asian countries were simultaneously being battered by severe flooding. Southern Thailand was deluged by rainfall unseen in centuries; in Indonesia, the rare Tropical Cyclone Senyar intensified seasonal monsoon rains, impacting millions; meanwhile, the destructive Cyclone Ditwah made landfall in Sri Lanka...



Hong Kong Wang Fuk Court Fire

- **Disaster:** A fire broke out shortly before 3 p.m. on November 26 and escalated within a few hours to a Level 5 blaze—the highest category.
- **Deaths:** 161
- **Impact:** Over 1,900 households; seven buildings damaged
- **Tzu Chi Response:** Emergency financial assistance distributed to more than 1,800 households; free medical services offered by the Tzu Chi Great Love Chinese Medicine Clinic



Thick smoke still rises from the scene on the afternoon after the blaze broke out. The fire was fully extinguished after 43 hours, with more than 2,000 firefighter shifts involved.

MU YAN YING



Standing With Survivors of Hong Kong's Wang Fuk Court Fire

Compiled by *Tzu Chi Monthly* editorial staff

Edited and translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Following Hong Kong's catastrophic fire, volunteers delivered relief and comfort to residents facing sudden loss, trauma, and displacement.



On the afternoon of November 26, 2025, a fire broke out at one of the high-rise buildings at Wang Fuk Court, a large residential complex in Tai Po, Hong Kong. Flames raced up the scaffolding that had been erected for exterior renovation and, fueled by strong winds, spread to six neighboring buildings. Within three hours, what began as a small blaze had escalated to a Level 5 fire, the highest on Hong Kong's five-tier alarm scale.

Mr. Yu, a resident, had the doors and windows of his home tightly closed when the fire started and did not hear the alarm. It was only when his wife called that he realized the danger and fled, managing to grab only his mobile phone, identification documents, wallet, and keys. He was born in 1951 and had survived the devastating Tung Tau Estate fire in Kowloon that same year, one of Hong Kong's major disasters. That conflagration had destroyed thousands of homes and left more than 10,000 people homeless. He never imagined he would again encounter a disastrous fire 74 years later.

At the height of the blaze, Pipi Lau (劉松蓮), a skilled floral arranger, happened to be in Tai Po buying flowers. Though she did not live at Wang Fuk Court, she was deeply anxious: Both of her sons are firefighters. Her younger son was sta-

tioned in the district where the fire occurred, and her elder in Kowloon. Though regulations normally prevent two siblings from working in the same district, her son stationed in Kowloon was immediately redeployed to Tai Po to help, underscoring the severity of the disaster. In fact, her elder son had already entered the fire scene. Despite the family's group chat, he still had not confirmed his safety by the early hours of the following morning.

Cordons restricted access at the scene. Unsure whether they would be allowed inside, Tzu Chi volunteers from nearby districts nevertheless arrived, remaining outside the perimeter, ready to assist in any way they could. Even if they could not enter, they resolved to stay nearby in case residents needed help. This commitment marked the volunteers' first response and the beginning of an intensive relief effort that would continue over the next two weeks.

Relief takes shape

Wang Fuk Court, about 42 years old, comprises eight high-rise buildings, with a total of 1,984 units. The estate was undergoing exterior renovation when the fire broke out. Flames erupted on the bamboo scaffolding on one of the buildings. The scaffold's safety netting failed to resist the fire, and highly flammable Styrofoam used to protect glass doors and windows only fueled the blaze. Shattered glass allowed flames to spread indoors, sweeping through seven of the eight buildings. It took more than 43 hours to extinguish the conflagration. Only one building was spared, thanks to a combination of distance from the fire, wind direction, and the firefighters' efforts.

The disaster ultimately claimed 161 lives, prompting the Hong Kong government to provide a condolence payment of 200,000 Hong Kong dollars (US\$25,700) to each bereaved family.



A volunteer stands beside a resident shaken by the fire, placing a reassuring hand on his shoulder. Tzu Chi distributed relief payments after the blaze to not only meet urgent needs but also offer emotional comfort.

YIU GA WAI



ly. Authorities additionally distributed an immediate emergency fund of 10,000 Hong Kong dollars (US\$1,300) to each affected household, followed by living subsidies of 100,000 Hong Kong dollars. To support those left homeless by the blaze, the government also arranged for more than one thousand transitional housing units.

Cherina Sze (施頌鈴), CEO of Tzu Chi Hong Kong, quickly mobilized the volunteer team in response to the disaster. Less than 24 hours later, they decided to distribute relief payments, though for a while they received no response from the authorities. Since they were not permitted to enter shelters, volunteers provided support from outside the perimeter, delivering water and dry food and bringing registration forms for aid.

Senior volunteer Tina Huang (黃錦秀) recalled that volunteers, dressed in Tzu Chi uniforms, greeted and offered care to residents leaving the shelters. As night fell and temperatures dropped, they distributed blankets and scarves. "Listening to their stories, we deeply felt their suffering and

Volunteers return to the perimeter of Wang Fuk Court on the morning of November 27 to offer care and comfort to affected residents.

MU YAN YING

the fragility of life," Huang said. "We are more than willing to listen, to provide hugs, and to do more for them." Despite their ordeal, many residents expressed gratitude for having survived.

On November 28, when the government began issuing official documentation for those affected by the fire, the team decided not to wait any longer and to use this identification to help register applications for relief payments.

On November 29, volunteers sent out messages announcing that relief payments—20,000 Hong Kong dollars for each bereaved family and 5,000 for each affected household—would be distributed on December 6 and 7 at the Tzu Chi Hong Kong office in Kowloon Tong. Free medical consultations for affected residents and frontline rescue personnel were also started that day at the Tzu Chi Great Love Chinese Medicine Clinic on

Nathan Road in Yau Ma Tei; these services continued through December 31.

Following the disaster, the government made Fung Leung Kit Memorial Secondary School, near the fire scene, available as a temporary center for evacuation and subsidy applications. Access was restricted to affected residents, so Tzu Chi volunteers stationed themselves under a tree outside, standing as they registered residents for relief payments. One passerby, noticing the volunteers on their feet and moved by their dedication, guided them to a space upstairs and provided two tables for their work. Government care team members also assisted by directing residents to the Tzu Chi registration area to complete their forms.

Huang recalled, "From then on, the number of residents coming to us increased. We gradually expanded from two tables to four, and the registration process ran smoothly."

Registration took place both indoors and outdoors. Some residents were initially hesitant to provide personal information, but volunteers patiently explained the process and showed their Tzu Chi identification, gradually building trust. Eventually, some residents even notified their neighbors to come forward and register.

Not wanting to miss any calls

"When Tzu Chi's relief messages were posted to major social media platforms, the phones at our branch office started ringing nonstop within an hour," said Marjorie Ma (馬子渝), a Tzu Chi Hong Kong staff member and certified volunteer. With volunteers handling registrations on the

front lines and the logistics team coordinating behind the scenes, the branch was completely stretched. Recognizing how urgently residents needed help, Ma didn't want to miss a single call and turned to her mother, also a Tzu Chi volunteer, for help. "She and other senior volunteers quickly stepped in and were at the office providing support within an hour," Ma said.

Much of the work went unseen by outsiders. Paper records collected at the front lines had to be entered into computers, a task volunteers carried out from morning until midnight for several consecutive days. Once the registration lists were complete, residents were notified to collect aid. However, after the first 70 messages were sent, the system flagged them as potential spam, blocking telecommunications service for 24 hours. With distribution imminent, volunteers anxiously sought a solution, reaching out to a marketing entrepreneur and a communications software expert, who quickly offered assistance. Within a single day, 2,000 messages were successfully sent, with Tzu Chi bearing no cost.

On the first day of distribution, volunteers at the registration desks had expected the work to be straightforward, but the five teams had to take turns to step outside to cry. "The expressions on residents' faces revealed exhaustion and intense worry," Leung Hiu Lam (梁曉霖) recalled. "When we asked, 'Are your family members okay?' many immediately broke down in tears. Their homes were gone, loved ones lost, pets too. Exposed to their emotions, we couldn't help but cry too." Many residents had already been visiting other charities or managing arrangements for deceased family members, leaving them little time to process their grief or attend to their own health. At Tzu Chi, they could finally pause, while doctors from the Tzu Chi International Medical Association provided care and comfort.

One woman rushed in after colliding with a passerby and dropping her phone onto the subway tracks. Worried about being late and missing her chance to receive aid, she first asked a station attendant to help retrieve her phone before coming to Tzu Chi. Volunteers reassured her, saying, "Go get your phone first; don't lose contact with your family. We'll wait for you here."

Tzu Chi Relief Payments

Dates | December 6–19, 2025

Location | Tzu Chi Hong Kong office, about a 30-minute drive from Wang Fuk Court

Households Assisted | Over 1,800

Aid Provided | HK\$ 20,000 per bereaved family; HK\$ 5,000 per affected household



Volunteers, along with those from other NGOs, help fire survivors register for aid (above). A volunteer holds up signs (right) to inform fire-affected residents about Tzu Chi's assistance.

ABOVE: LU MEI HWEI; RIGHT: YIU GA WAI





Over the two days, 1,543 of the 1,700 registered households collected their aid, with additional payments issued the following week, bringing the total number of households assisted to over 1,800. Of the 1,900 households affected by the disaster, Tzu Chi assisted over 90 percent.

Volunteer Yu Ka Zeon (余嘉進), a professional social worker, noted that although the government and social welfare organizations provided assistance, the sheer number of affected residents meant many had to queue repeatedly and complete multiple forms, leaving them physically and emotionally drained. "They have already

gone through a lot," he said. "Can we help ease their burden?" Tzu Chi's second phase of aid will proactively coordinate with the government's "one social worker per household" system, working directly with assigned social workers to spare residents repeated trips.

Unable to participate in the distributions in person due to work, Yu Ka Zeon followed updates on social media. Reading residents' messages about how moved they were by their visit to Tzu Chi, he couldn't hold back his tears, deeply grateful to the volunteers who delivered love and care straight to residents' hearts.



Challenges for survivors

Volunteer Pipi Lau, whose two sons are firefighters, was on duty outside the fire scene on that first long, harrowing night. "The acrid smoke and towering flames were shocking," she recalled. "I was deeply worried about my sons. But I couldn't cry—I had to take responsibility and do what a Tzu Chi volunteer should do."

Seeing the fire rage even more fiercely on the way home weighed heavily on her heart. "I couldn't sleep that night," she said. "The next morning, I urged my younger son to be careful, as he, too, had entered the fire scene for rescue



People queue quietly and respectfully to place fresh flowers at a makeshift memorial in front of Wang Fuk Court, in remembrance of those who perished.

LEFT: CHOW QING LAN; ABOVE: LO CHI TAK

work." She found solace in volunteering, as staying busy with Tzu Chi helped her cope. She also tried to transform her worry for her loved ones into blessings.

Her elder son returned home a few days later. "He rarely talks about work because he doesn't want me to worry," she said. "After the fire started, he entered the fire scene three times. Though he was doing his duty, I still think he was incredibly brave. He told me that our encouragement was the greatest support we could give him."

Mr. Yu, the elderly resident introduced at the beginning of this article, later visited the Tzu Chi Hong Kong office to collect his relief payment. He told volunteers, "Surviving this fire feels like a miracle. I'm very lucky, but I also feel sad for those who lost their lives."

This relief effort marked the largest disaster operation in Tzu Chi Hong Kong's 32-year history. CEO Cherina Sze hoped the cash payments could help survivors manage the immediate aftermath, while acknowledging that material aid alone cannot heal the emotional wounds left by such a tragic event. "Recovery from psychological trauma is a long journey," she said. "We hope to be there with them, supporting them as they heal."



Tzu Chi Responds to Devastating Floods in Indonesia

By Ronaldo, Nuraina, Yanti Yunita, Hidayat Sikumbang, Pipi Susanti, and Ari Zoelva

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

After Cyclone Senyar, severed roads and power outages made Tzu Chi's relief work extremely difficult. Volunteers used every available means of transportation to reach isolated communities with life-saving supplies.





Tropical cyclones rarely form in the Strait of Malacca near the equator, yet Cyclone Senyar broke that pattern, becoming the first to do so in 140 years. Making landfall in Indonesia on November 26, 2025, it intensified the extreme rainfall that had been pounding northern Sumatra for days. Rivers overflowed, flash floods swept through communities, and key transportation routes were cut off.

The storm battered the three Sumatran provinces of Aceh, North Sumatra, and West Sumatra. According to early December figures from Indonesia's National Agency for Disaster Management, more than 1,200 people were killed or went missing, nearly 510,000 were evacuated, and 3.3 million were affected. These are not just statistics—they represent millions of real people whose lives were suddenly upended.

Meals prepared despite blackouts

Medan, the largest city in North Sumatra, is usually a bustling commercial hub, but the relentless rain transformed it into a waterlogged landscape. Murky yellow water inundated streets, shops, and homes so quickly that many residents had no time to pack their belongings before fleeing to temporary shelters. Despite the danger, however, some chose to stay behind to look after their homes.

Power outages plunged daily life into further chaos. Amid the confusion, a faint light shone from the home of Tzu Chi volunteer Sani Husiana (郭春霞). On the morning of November 28, after a disaster response meeting, her home was quickly converted into a temporary communal kitchen. "It was extremely urgent," she recalled, still sounding tense. "All the volunteers sprang into action, buying ingredients and starting to cook."

Tzu Chi eventually set up more than 30 such communal kitchens, producing thousands of boxed meals under very basic conditions.

Volunteers wade through floodwaters to deliver food and drinking water to affected residents sheltering at a mosque in Deli Serdang, North Sumatra, on November 30.

KAMIN



Volunteers then waded through waist-deep muddy water to deliver hot meals, uncooked rice, and bottled water. In Baru Village, 64-year-old Nuraini huddled with her grandson in the corner of a mosque. They had not had a proper meal in three days, surviving only on a little bread salvaged by neighbors. When volunteers handed her some warm food, the resilient grandmother's voice trembled as she said, "Thank you so much. There's no water, no electricity—the wiring has short-circuited. Everything is ruined. We just can't go home."

In addition to food and water, volunteers delivered clothing, sarongs, cleaning supplies, and other necessities to Medan and surrounding areas. In Klumpang Kebun, Deli Serdang, resi-

dents stood in floodwaters and formed a human chain to move the supplies that had been brought to their community. A young mother's eyes welled with tears as she received warm meals, explaining that her family had gone two days without eating. "Praise be to Allah," she exclaimed. "Finally, someone has come to help us!"

As the rain subsided and floodwaters gradually receded, sanitation conditions deteriorated rapidly. Skin infections, diarrhea, and colds began spreading in shelters. Tzu Chi quickly launched medical relief efforts, though access to some areas remained difficult. In South Tapanuli, mountain roads leading to Batang Toru were blocked in several places by landslides and had to be cleared by heavy machinery. Volunteers,



working alongside the military and police, navigated muddy, treacherous roads for over four and a half hours to deliver medicines and daily necessities.

One shelter in Batang Toru housed about 600 residents from three villages. A notice posted on a bulletin board reported that 56 homes had been completely destroyed, with some residents still unaccounted for.

Hari Kesumua, a physician with the Tzu Chi International Medical Association, examined residents and prescribed medication for diarrhea, itchy skin, and other conditions. "They've lost their homes and urgently need food and medicine," he said. "The disaster is severe, and we're grateful to be able to ease some of their burden."

Deforestation has undermined Sumatra's soil stability and water retention. Torrential rains from Cyclone Senyar triggered mudflows, leaving areas around Medan blanketed in mud and debris, as shown in the left picture. Navigating damaged mountain roads, volunteers from Padang deliver relief supplies to Agam Regency and other areas (right).

LEFT: LEO RIANTO; RIGHT: PIPI SUSANTI

Delivery via zipline and boats

As people struggled to cope, a harsh reality became impossible to ignore: In just two or three days, Cyclone Senyar dumped hundreds of millimeters of rain, far exceeding the region's average monthly rainfall. Years of unchecked land devel-



Physicians from the Tzu Chi International Medical Association provide free medical care to people affected by the floods. Skin infections, colds, and other infectious diseases were common in the wake of the floods.

LIANI

opment had further heightened the risks of flooding and landslides.

Indonesia's largest environmental movement organization, the Indonesian Forum for the Environment (WALHI), reported that between 2016 and 2025, roughly 1.4 million hectares of forest in northern Sumatra were cleared for plantations and mining. With this natural sponge stripped away, rainwater can hardly be absorbed by the soil. Instead, it surges over exposed land, triggering highly destructive mudslides. This explains why, during extreme rainfall, villages can be swiftly engulfed by mud, while roads and communication infrastructure suffer severe damage.

The disaster cut off transportation links in multiple communities in the regencies of North Tapanuli and Central Tapanuli, as well as in the city of Sibolga, all in North Sumatra, isolating communities like islands. With ground access impossible, Tzu Chi partnered with the military to deliver relief by air. Helicopters airdropped supplies, including 4,000 towels, clothing, plastic mats, and hundreds of boxes of instant noodles and bottled water. Such efforts provided a vital lifeline to stranded residents.

In Kutablang, Bireuen Regency, Aceh Province, a bridge was washed out by a raging stream. Residents on the opposite bank, cut off from the outside world, had exhausted their remaining food supplies. After volunteers reached the site, they worked with rescue personnel to set up an aerial zipline. Box after box glided across the gap, delivering food and daily necessities into the outstretched hands of those anxiously waiting on the other side.

Conditions were also dire in Kuala Simpang, Aceh Tamiang Regency. Completely cut off from food and clean water, residents sent desperate pleas for help through social media. Volunteers from Medan did everything they could to reach them. When the land route proved impassable, they turned to the waterways. On December 3, a team led by volunteer Shu Tjeng (楊樹清) traveled by vehicle from Medan to the Port of Pangkalan Susu, transferred to a large boat, and then boarded small wooden vessels capable of navigating shallow waters. After days of isolation, the residents finally received much-needed supplies.

Hundreds of thousands of people elsewhere in Aceh sought refuge in evacuation centers. Clean drinking water and food were in short supply. Pidie Jaya Regency, about 220 kilometers (135 miles) from Banda Aceh, suffered devastating losses when floodwaters thick with mud and massive logs slammed into homes, killing 20 people. In the village of Cot Gadong, one of Tzu Chi's distribution sites, evacuees packed into a mosque. When night came and the cold set in, they wrapped themselves in the blankets and clothing delivered by volunteers to keep warm.

Mutual help

In the wake of the floods, alongside other relief work, Tzu Chi volunteers helped set up shelters and install water towers to supply clean drinking water. But about two weeks later, in mid-December, the devastation remained stark. In Karang Baru, Aceh Tamiang Regency, floodwaters had left almost surreal scenes: cars swept up and lodged against walls and streets buried under tens of centimeters of mud. The roar of heavy machinery echoed constantly as debris was cleared. With no clean water for washing,

Tzu Chi Relief Figures

(DATA AS OF DECEMBER 22, 2025)

Key Affected Areas	Aceh, North Sumatra, and West Sumatra	
Scope of Assistance	13 regencies/cities across 79 distribution sites	
Instances of Assistance	47,845	
Supplies Provided	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 20,061 hot meals• 12,100 eggs• 5,046 boxes of drinking water• 14,647 blankets• 5,208 sets of cleaning supplies• Additional items provided included clothing, towels, toiletries, instant noodles, milk powder, face masks, mosquito nets, and generators.	
Housing Reconstruction	2,500 homes planned, with ground already broken for 648 homes in North Sumatra	



A volunteer respectfully hands a bag of supplies to a flood survivor.

COURTESY OF TZU CHI INDONESIA



many shelter residents still bore mud stains on their bodies.

But the situation wasn't all bleak. Amid the destruction, a sense of order and mutual support emerged. Many people were themselves flood survivors, but once they ensured their own families were safe, they chose to help neighbors in even greater need.

Palembayan, Agam Regency, West Sumatra, provides a clear example. Tzu Chi volunteers from Padang, the capital of the province, endured a grueling road journey, arriving at 4:30 a.m. on December 4 to deliver badly needed supplies.

Local residents had already organized a communal kitchen, and each household had contributed about 7,000 Indonesian rupiah (US\$0.45) to compensate those who cleared debris and reopened roads each day. In addition to deliver-

Volunteers distribute food and bottled water to flood victims.

LIANI

ing food, baby diapers, fuel, and clothing, Tzu Chi provided a generator to power the communal kitchen until electricity could be restored.

With transportation in many stricken areas still disrupted and streets littered with mud and debris, much work remains to be done. Once the emergency relief phase concludes, Tzu Chi will assist with bridge repairs to support recovery and work with the government to build safe, permanent housing for affected communities. The road ahead is long, and although some communities were once isolated like islands, they are not alone. Tzu Chi will continue to accompany survivors as they rebuild their homes and their lives.

Rushing Aid to Flood Survivors in Southern Thailand

By Budsara Sombut, Pinticha Jansuksri, and Singharat Chunchom

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting Photos by Pinticha Jansuksri

In the wake of severe deluges in southern Thailand, Tzu Chi raced over a thousand kilometers to bring 3,000 relief packages to an underserved district.



When a Tzu Chi disaster assessment team visited Banna, Chana District, on December 1, they found that some families were still needing boats to get around.



The northeast monsoon typically brings abundant rainfall every November to southern Thailand, but Tropical Cyclone Senyar unleashed additional torrential rain on the region in late November 2025. This triggered widespread flooding across ten provinces, including Songkhla. The floods claimed over 180 lives and affected more than three million people. In Hat Yai, the largest city in Songkhla, the highest single-day rainfall in 300 years was recorded. Streets and homes were submerged, forcing residents onto rooftops, where they clutched their belongings and waved desperately for rescue. One resident, still shaken by the experience, recalled, "In 2000 and 2013, floods only reached the first floor. Never before has my entire building been completely submerged like this."

While media coverage focused on Hat Yai, nearby Chana District faced severe challenges of its own. When Chana's deputy district chief met with Tzu Chi's disaster assessment team on December 1, he acknowledged that most relief supplies had been sent to Hat Yai, leaving Chana without organized assistance.

Coastal communities such as Sakom and Banna were among the hardest hit, with floodwaters rising as high as the third floor. Damage to the local water system made even basic daily life a struggle—residents had no choice but to wash pots and dishes in muddy floodwater. Livestock farms upstream had been inundated, and floodwater, contaminated by the carcasses of drowned cattle, posed a risk of carrying infectious disease. District officials noted a critical shortage of water

Tzu Chi Thailand Deputy CEO Chang Huei-chen (張惠珍, second from left in the left photo) and her team visit a flood-affected household to assess their needs.

Flood survivors (right) prepare to return home after receiving supplies at a Tzu Chi distribution on December 3.

trucks; even with available funding, the problem could not be remedied quickly.

As a result, Tzu Chi Thailand decided to focus its relief efforts on the underserved Chana District. Volunteers rushed to procure supplies, including fever and anti-inflammatory medications, cold medicine, household essentials, and cleaning supplies. On December 1 and 2, 3,000 relief sets were packed at the Jing Si Hall in Bangkok. The supplies were then transported over a thousand kilometers (620 miles) in a 15-hour overland journey to Chana.

Volunteers from Penang and Kedah in Malaysia joined the subsequent distribution effort, along with an association of Taiwanese businesspeople in southern Thailand. On December 3 and 4, aid reached 2,600 households in Sakom and 400 households in Banna.

A 90-year-old grandmother in Sakom recounted wading through chest-deep floodwaters to take shelter at a local school. Thinking back on the ordeal, she remained visibly unsettled, pressing her hands to her chest and weeping. "I was so scared," she said. "I've never experienced a flood like this!" Volunteers noticed she had a slight fever, but fortunately, the medicines arrived in time.

With clean water scarce in the aftermath of the disaster, younger people stepped up. Suppapol and his cousin Afnan spent seven or eight consecutive days transporting large water containers from the township office to their community, distributing water door-to-door. Suppapol said, "My family needs water, and so do others. I didn't want Afnan to do all the work alone. Am I tired? Of course I am, but I am happy to do it."

Tzu Chi plans to continue distributing daily necessities and food until water and electricity are fully restored in the affected areas.

•



Tzu Chi Relief Distributions

Dates | December 3–4, 2025

Location | Sakom and Banna, Chana District, Songkhla Province

Households Assisted | **3,000**

Aid Provided |

- **Medical Supplies:** painkillers, anti-inflammatory drugs, cold medicine, adhesive bandages, anti-bacterial ointments, povidone-iodine, alcohol, anti-itch cream, eye drops, and cotton and gauze sets
- **Daily Essentials:** laundry detergent, toothpaste, toothbrushes, and shampoo
- **Cleaning Supplies:** buckets and scrub brushes



Tzu Chi and the SDGs

Eat Green, Live Light

By Yeh Tzu-hao

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting Photos by Hsiao Yiu-hwa

The carbon footprint of livestock farming around the world rivals that of the entire transportation sector. Every meal matters. Your plate can be a force for change.

According to 2023 statistics from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, raising livestock such as cattle, pigs, and chickens accounts for about 12 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions each year. When emissions from related activities—such as deforestation for pasture, feed crop cultivation, and animal waste management—are included, the greenhouse gases associated with meat consumption are equivalent to the total emissions from all forms of transportation worldwide. It logically follows that choosing a nutritionally balanced plant-based diet is a powerful



step to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions and help slow global warming.

Since its founding in Taiwan in 1966, Tzu Chi has encouraged vegetarianism among its members in their daily lives. This commitment was later extended to its growing institutional network, with only plant-based food served in its branch offices, hospitals, and schools. Then, during the 2003 SARS outbreak, Dharma Master Cheng Yen made a call for the general public to adopt a vegetarian diet. "That was the first time vegetarianism was promoted to society at large," recalled Isaac Chiu (邱國氣) from the CEO's office



of Tzu Chi's charity mission.

The SARS outbreak was linked to human contact with and consumption of wild animals. In response, the Master urged people to refrain from killing and to cherish life, reminding everyone that illness can enter through what we choose to eat.

In 2008, after Cyclone Nargis devastated Myanmar, Tzu Chi provided relief and distributed rice seeds. In gratitude, local farmers began saving a handful of rice each day to help others. Master Cheng Yen praised their kindness but also noted the growing concerns of global warm-

Modern vegetarian cuisine emphasizes whole, minimally processed foods and uses little oil, salt, or sugar. This approach preserves nutrients and lets the natural flavors of the ingredients shine.

COURTESY OF DANDELION RESTAURANT

ing. She encouraged everyone to "Eat vegetarian until 80 percent full, and use the remaining 20 percent to help others." Such a practice combines a vegetarian diet and food conservation to address both hunger and environmental challenges.



Raising livestock requires large amounts of feed and water, and the resulting animal waste and greenhouse gas emissions harm the environment. The ecological impact of meat consumption is thus far greater than that of a plant-based diet.

HUANG XIAO-ZHE

Inspired by the Master's guidance for vegetarianism, Tzu Chi volunteers continued promoting the cause. In 2016, they launched the 111 Ethical Eating Day campaign, inviting people everywhere to eat vegetarian on January 11 each year.

In 2021, amidst the COVID-19 outbreak, Master Cheng Yen intensified her compassionate urging for vegetarianism, declaring, "We must talk about it, we must actively promote it, and we absolutely must practice it." To support this mission, Tzu Chi established a dedicated team to advance plant-based eating. Isaac Chiu, who oversees this effort, explained that their approach has expanded step by step—from individuals to communities, from restaurants to the Friendly International Tourism City initiative—encourag-

ing more people to speak about, promote, and practice vegetarianism together.

Food delivery platform

Despite growing global awareness of plant-based diets, misconceptions about vegetarian food persist—even in Taiwan, where about 13 to 14 percent of the population followed a vegetarian diet in 2023, ranking the island just behind India and Mexico, according to the online site World of Statistics. Many people still view vegetarian food as bland, inconvenient, expensive, or nutritionally unbalanced.

To address these concerns, Tzu Chi launched the VO2 vegetarian food delivery platform in Hualien in 2021. It was initially designed to meet the meal delivery needs of staff within Tzu Chi's organizations in Hualien, but the platform also aims to dispel such misconceptions by making vegetarian meals tasty, nutritious, convenient, and affordable, encouraging more people to embrace plant-based dining.

The foundation collaborated with the Tzu Chi University of Science and Technology (now

merged with Tzu Chi University) to develop the platform. They created the software, recruited partner restaurants, and built a delivery system dedicated entirely to vegetarian meals. "We invited well-known vegetarian restaurants in Hualien to join," explained Isaac Chiu, "so both regular vegetarians and those curious about plant-based dining could easily browse and order through the platform."

However, food delivery services often produce large amounts of single-use waste. How could this be avoided?

"Promoting vegetarianism also means protecting the environment," Chiu said. "So, we insisted on using reusable food containers."

To make this possible, VO2 uses designated pick-up points instead of home delivery. Drivers deliver meals to these locations; customers pick up their meals, rinse the containers after eating, and return them. The containers are then sent to a cleaning facility for thorough washing and sanitization before being returned to partner restaurants. These practices eliminate the need for disposable cups, bowls, lunchboxes, and utensils.

Since its launch, more than 30 vegetarian eateries in Hualien have joined the platform. Pick-up points have expanded from Tzu Chi

University, Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital, and the Jing Si Hall to include public institutions such as the Hualien County Government, Environmental Protection Bureau, and Fire Department, as well as various private companies.

One day, Paul Wang (王仁宏), a medical statistics consultant at Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital, picked up meals at Tzu Chi University, just a five-minute walk away. His wife works at the university, and during summer break, their daughter is there as well. "So I come from the hospital and we can eat together," he said. "Once you order, the food comes here, so there's no need to go out. It's very convenient for people who eat vegetarian."

Behind this convenience are restaurant owners who share Tzu Chi's commitment to sustainability and vegetarianism. They not only support VO2's eco-friendly model but also take pride in serving quality vegetarian food.

Restaurant owner Lin Yu-yang (林于揚), for example, takes pride in his bento meals. He shared that they prepare about 11 or 12 dishes for each meal. Although putting together each lunchbox takes a lot of time, they want to provide that level of variety for their customers. Since it's the same food his family eats, they meticulously

Why Does Livestock Farming Produce So Much Greenhouse Gas?

(SOURCE: FAO)

Breakdown of Emissions in Livestock Farming:

45%
Feed production & processing

Emissions from growing, fertilizing, irrigating, processing, and transporting feed crops, plus deforestation for pastures or feed crops.

39%
Enteric fermentation

Ruminants like cows and sheep release large amounts of methane during digestion. Methane has 28 times the greenhouse effect of carbon dioxide.

10%
Manure management

Decomposition of animal waste and nitrogen fertilizers releases nitrous oxide, which has 265 times the greenhouse effect of carbon dioxide.

6%
Other

Carbon dioxide emissions from fuel and electricity used in machinery, refrigeration, transportation, and other related activities.



choose the ingredients, cooking oils, and sauces. They also do their best to ensure every lunchbox feels fresh and thoughtfully prepared. "We try to earn customers' trust step by step with this dedication," he said.

Another provider, Lin Yu-xin (林鈺馨), specializes in healthy, lighter meals and runs her business with an idealistic vision. She hopes to promote wholesome vegetarian fare by offering food that tastes, looks, and smells good. However, she faced difficulties soon after opening, when the COVID-19 pandemic began. Fortunately, joining the Tzu Chi Loving Store initiative increased her visibility within the Tzu Chi community and helped her stay afloat with the support of volunteers and employees. "It was thanks to Tzu Chi's doctors, nurses, and volunteers that we made it through that difficult time," she said gratefully. She joined the VO2 platform at the end of 2024, and her health-focused meals have since reached more people.

In just a few years, VO2 has delivered about 120,000 meals, establishing a strong presence in the more urban areas of northern Hualien County, including Hualien City, Ji'an Township, and Xincheng Township. The platform is now expanding further south and into other counties and cities. Chiu shared that plans are also underway to expand into Taipei: "We'll start by hosting vegetarian food markets to connect with restaurants interested in promoting plant-based dining. Once that relationship is built, collaboration becomes much easier."

Plantarium

To further promote vegetarianism, Tzu Chi opened Plantarium in 2023, a multifunctional space located in the basement of a Tzu Chi office near Taipei's Songshan Station. The venue combines a vegetarian buffet restaurant, a supermarket, a bakery, and a cooking classroom, allowing visitors to dine in, learn how to prepare vegetari-

Meals and drinks on the VO2 vegetarian food delivery platform are served in reusable containers and cups, avoiding the single-use tableware common in food delivery services.

an dishes, and purchase ingredients. It also houses a Jing Si Books & Café and an open area for talks and events.

Since its opening, volunteers in the Greater Taipei area have actively used the space to promote vegetarian eating among young people. Volunteer Ji Ya-ying (紀雅瑩) recalled visiting the site in January 2024 and seeing a group of high school students having lunch there. "I asked their teacher about it," she said. "He told me the students were being rewarded for participating in their school's environmental volunteer program. Someone sponsored the meal, so he brought them here."

Teenagers typically favor fried chicken and other fast foods, so getting them to eat vegetarian is not easy. Seeing the students enjoy plant-based dishes delighted Ji. Inspired, she and fellow volunteers began collaborating with schools and companies on a program called Sustainable Earth Impact. Funded by companies, the initiative helps young people discover the appeal of vegetarian food while learning about its role in protecting life and the planet.

Each event begins around noon, with teachers and students first enjoying lunch at the vegetarian buffet. After tasting dishes prepared by professional chefs, students join a cooking class to make vegetarian sandwiches. Volunteers also lead environmental education sessions, explaining how plant-based eating can help slow global warming.

"There are over a billion cows in the world," explained volunteer Guo Mei-jun (郭玟君) during one such event. "If they formed a country, it would be the second-largest emitter of carbon dioxide." She went on to share several eye-opening figures: Eliminating meat for just one meal can cut carbon emissions by about 780 grams, and eating 15 vegetarian meals cuts emissions by roughly 12 kilograms—the amount a mature tree absorbs in a year.

Starting with just one meal, volunteers aim to plant the seed of environmental awareness in students' hearts. They created a Tree Card for participants, with a square to color in each time they eat a vegetarian meal. Filling all 15 squares symbolizes planting a tree for the planet.

"There's a new English word: climatarian,"



Guo told the students. "It means someone who eats with the climate in mind. I hope you'll proudly tell your family and friends, 'I'm eating vegetarian for the Earth.'"

Reflections gathered after the events showed that many students began to recognize the impact of their daily choices. One vowed to skip meat for two meals a day, saying, "Even when I do eat meat, it'll be less than 50 grams." Another wrote, "I didn't realize that eating less meat could cut carbon emissions—and vegetarian food actually tastes great." A third commented, "After eating a vegetarian meal, I felt like I'd done something meaningful."

The program's impact extends beyond Taiwanese students. Students and teachers from international schools also reported positive impressions. A student from Taipei European School wrote, "Save the Earth—before it's too late." Stewart Redden, head of the British Secondary & High School Section at the school, shared that visiting Plantarium showed students that vegetarian food isn't bland or boring, but can be fun and integrated into daily life. "One of the

key things is that after today, I think the students can probably find something to do to make their lives more sustainable," he remarked.

Green hospitality

In addition to restaurants, the hospitality sector is another key arena for promoting vegetarianism. Hualien, the birthplace of Tzu Chi, relies heavily on tourism as a major economic driver. Building on this strength, Tzu Chi partnered with the Hualien County Government to launch the Friendly International Tourism City initiative, encouraging hotels, guesthouses, and bed-and-breakfasts to offer vegetarian-friendly hospitality. This initiative also promotes low-carbon, sustainable travel that embodies the spirit of environmental responsibility.

"If you provide breakfast, we sincerely hope you can offer vegetarian options to your guests," said Isaac Chiu during an information session held at the Tzu Chi office in Yuli, Hualien. "Let's create a distinctive charm that sets Hualien apart from other counties and cities."

He went on to explain the certification stan-



dards for Vegetarian-Friendly Hotels: Establishments where vegetarian dishes make up at least 40 percent of the menu receive a one-star Green Veggie certification; 60 percent earns two stars, 80 percent earns three, while a fully vegetarian menu is recognized with four stars.

Compared to promoting the VO2 delivery platform, advancing Vegetarian-Friendly Hotels is undoubtedly more challenging. Restaurants that joined VO2 were already vegetarian establishments, serving customers who actively sought plant-based food. In contrast, most hotel and guesthouse guests are not vegetarian. Balancing travelers' preferences with a commitment to green, plant-based dining requires both creativity and conviction from business owners.

Before joining the program, Wu Mei-xiang (吳美香)—a bed-and-breakfast owner from the Taroko Indigenous group—was already offering meat-free buffet breakfasts. "Afterwards, I made it a point in our marketing to clearly highlight that our breakfast is vegetarian," she said. Wu challenged the common perception that Indigenous cuisine must include fish or meat.

High school students try their hand at making sandwiches in the cooking classroom at Plantarium (opposite). They also learn how they can make a difference for both the planet and people through sessions about global warming and how vegetarian eating can reduce carbon emissions (above).

Her dishes are simple yet vibrant, featuring fresh produce such as dragon fruit, pumpkin, tomatoes, and sweet potato leaves, along with tofu and other ingredients. When enhanced with traditional Indigenous herbs and spices like mountain litsea, the food takes on a distinctive and memorable flavor all its own.

Wu's creativity is an important part of the menu she offers. She dyes rice burgers pink with dragon fruit and layers them with fresh vegetables to create signature dishes. Her bed-and-breakfast also provides space for a Tzu Chi tutoring program for local children. Having grown accustomed to her vegetarian cooking, the children once complained that a lunchbox containing



meat “didn’t taste good” when served one evening because Wu hadn’t had time to cook that day. This goes to show that with care and quality ingredients, vegetarian cuisine can truly win people over.

Zhou Jin-lian (周金蓮) is another bed-and-breakfast owner who has joined the program. Her business has earned a three-star Vegetarian-Friendly Hotel certification. To run a bed-and-breakfast successfully, both the “bed” (the living environment) and the “breakfast”—as well as the emotional experience—must be of high quality. “For example,” Zhou shared, “creating warm memories for guests and giving them something meaningful to take away adds emotional value to

their experience. It can even make them willing to pay a little more for the room.”

Zhou added that whole-food vegetarian dishes are often easier to prepare than meat-based ones. With simple cooking, slicing, and mixing, she can create delicious meals. When her bed-and-breakfast is fully booked, serving vegetarian food allows her to prepare breakfast quickly for as many as 30 guests.

Private guided tours to hidden scenic spots, delicious meals, and comfortable, eco-friendly accommodations all contribute to a memorable stay—one that guests will want to repeat. Likewise, the vision of a Friendly International Tourism City is to help visitors fall in love with Hualien through



green travel and dining, fostering sustainable prosperity through collective effort.

Thanks to joint promotion by Tzu Chi and the Hualien County Government, more than 500 hospitality operators have attended related information sessions. Many are eager to apply for certification, but the county is currently approving only 23 establishments per year. This makes each Vegetarian-Friendly Hotel certification a true mark of quality and commitment.

“Taiwan has set a goal of reaching net-zero emissions by 2050,” Chiu said. “The hospitality industry must also move toward low-carbon operations. When environmentally conscious travelers see the vegetarian-friendly, low-carbon



Indigenous cuisine can delight the taste buds using entirely plant-based ingredients. The left photo shows food being prepared in the kitchen of an Indigenous-run bed-and-breakfast that has received a Vegetarian-Friendly Hotel certification for its vegetarian offerings. The certification (above), marked by a green leaf ark, reminds both businesses and their guests that every choice and effort they make directly affects the planet's future.

ABOVE: COURTESY OF THE TZU CHI FOUNDATION

hospitality and travel options we offer, they'll likely choose them. Let's reduce carbon starting with breakfast.”

Toward a sustainable future

Tzu Chi's work to encourage people to adopt an environmentally friendly, low-carbon diet supports the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals—not only SDG 12, “Responsible Consumption and Production,” but also efforts to slow climate change and global warming, while protecting both marine and terrestrial ecosystems. Moreover, reducing the grain used to feed livestock can help alleviate hunger and poverty, while also promoting personal health and well-being.

Even as the world faces a severe global warming crisis, there remains hope for meaningful improvement. Tzu Chi continues to promote vegetarianism without pause, using diverse approaches to guide more people onto the vegetarian path and move collectively toward a more sustainable future.





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COURTESY OF THE TZU CHI FOUNDATION

Can What You Eat Help Combat Global Warming?

(SOURCES: CLIMATE WATCH, OUR WORLD IN DATA, GOMACRO)

- **Cattle's climate impact:** If the world's one billion cows were considered a country, their greenhouse gas emissions would rank second only to China, making them the world's second-largest emitter.
- **Low-carbon eating:** Plant-based foods like peas, beans, and nuts produce less than two kilograms of carbon dioxide per kilogram, far lower than animal-based foods.
- **Power of personal choice:** Dietary change is one of the most effective ways for people to lower their environmental impact. According to an Oxford University study, cutting out meat and dairy from one's diet can reduce an individual's carbon footprint from food by up to 73 percent, depending on location. If this shift were adopted globally, a vegan diet could dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions, water pollution, and land use.

Daily Carbon Emissions by Diet Type

(SOURCES: LEAP PROJECT/NATURE FOOD)

High meat-eaters	>100 g meat/day	10.24 kg
Low meat-eaters	<50 g meat/day	5.37 kg
Vegetarians		4.16 kg
Vegans		2.47 kg



Smart Vegetarian Eating

A Dietician Highlights the Essentials

Narrated by Joyce Chen, executive director of the Taiwan Vegetarian Nutrition Society

Compiled by Yeh Tzu-hao

Edited and translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Photo courtesy of Joyce Chen



- **Plant-based diets are both low-carbon and healthy, helping to reduce the risk of chronic diseases.**
- **Eating vegetarian doesn't mean you'll get hungry sooner; the key is having the right proportions.**
- **The 2-1-1 Plate is easy to remember: half vegetables and fruits, and the other half divided evenly between protein and starches.**
- **Nutritional needs vary by age group.**

Around the world, sustainability, ESG (environmental, social, and governance) initiatives, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals are gaining momentum. As part of this movement, many countries are seeking to cut carbon emissions through dietary changes. In Taiwan, eating out or ordering food from restaurants is very common, and per-capita meat consumption has reached 87 kilograms (190 pounds) per year, contributing to a high dietary carbon footprint. This is why many civic groups are actively promoting vegetarian or plant-based eating as a way to reduce emissions.

Plant-based diets tend to be nutrient-dense, lower in calories, and faster to digest, meaning the food doesn't linger in your system for long, which can actually be beneficial. But does this mean that vegetarians get hungry more easily? That might happen, but the key to avoiding it is adopting the right eating habits.

A common issue among vegetarians is not eating enough vegetables or fruits, and not getting sufficient protein. Instead, many consume too many refined carbohydrates, such as white

rice or noodles. Take a typical store-bought Taiwanese lunchbox, for example: Even though it may come with three side dishes (usually vegetable-based), the portions of the side dishes are usually smaller than the serving of rice. In addition, many vegetarians don't eat enough beans or bean products, which can leave them feeling hungry sooner.

The 2-1-1 Plate is a simple idea for anyone who wants to eat plant-based and stay healthy. Divide your plate into two halves. One half should be vegetables and fruits, with vegetables as the main portion. Because vegetarians are more prone to iron and calcium deficiencies, it helps to emphasize dark green vegetables, such as kale, collard greens, Chinese kale, or red amaranth. Bok choy, though not dark green, is also relatively high in calcium. Vegetables like bell peppers, tomatoes, and eggplants can be added for color and variety.

The other half of the plate should be split evenly between protein and staple foods. The best protein sources are whole legumes, such as lentils, chickpeas, or beans. For the quarter of the

The 2-1-1 Plate

The concept comes from the Healthy Eating Plate, developed by the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

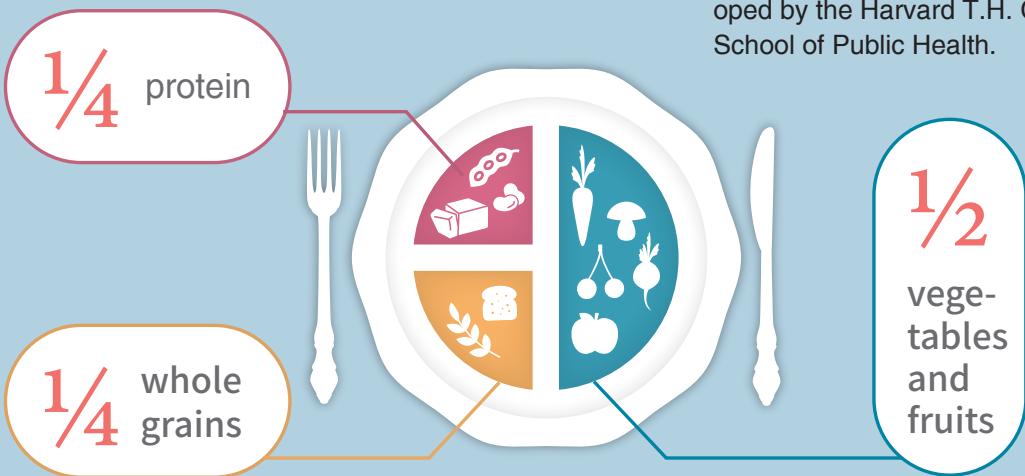


plate allocated to staple foods, choose whole grains like brown rice to stay full longer. Starchy root vegetables—such as sweet potatoes or pumpkins—can also be included.

Children, who are more active, can have some refined starches for quick energy. Mixing half brown rice with half white rice is a good way to help them get used to the texture of whole grains from an early age.

For older adults, preventing muscle loss is especially important, making adequate protein intake crucial. Many seniors have smaller appetites and struggle to eat enough protein, which can lead to rapid muscle decline. As a general guideline, daily protein needs in grams are roughly equal to one's body weight multiplied by 1.2. (For example, a 60-kilogram person should take in 72 grams of protein each day.) Plant-based protein powders, prepared as a drink, can be a convenient supplement—they are concentrated, low in volume, and easy to consume, helping seniors meet their daily protein requirements.

Bone health is another major concern for seniors. Bone density peaks around age 30 and declines thereafter. Post-menopausal women experience even faster bone loss than men, so

their diets should particularly emphasize protein, calcium, vitamin D, and vitamin B12. Even so, diet alone isn't enough to maintain muscle or bone density—exercise is essential. Some seniors do moderate weight-bearing workouts at the gym, which is an excellent way to support muscle strength and bone health.

Research consistently shows that people who consume more meat tend to have higher rates of obesity and chronic disease. Red meat, for example, is classified as a Group 2A carcinogen, and its high heme-iron content can increase the risk of insulin resistance, which is detrimental to health.

While scientific evidence strongly supports the benefits of vegetarian diets, meaningful, community-driven action can be even more impactful. A good example is the 21-day health challenge launched by Tzu Chi volunteers. The program connects participants with restaurants, dieticians, and physicians, helping them personally experience the benefits of whole-food, plant-based eating. Ultimately, success in promoting vegetarian diets comes from personal commitment and active community participation. Dieticians and doctors can provide guidance, but the energy and dedication of grassroots involvement are the key to success.



Don't Rush It

By Zhang Jin-yun

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Painting by Weng Mu

When a noisy disruption tests his patience, this principal turns a potential conflict into a teachable moment.

It was another busy afternoon. Principal Li returned to his office to continue his unfinished work. Before long, however, the heavy thudding of a bouncing ball broke his focus. He paused and walked to the door, where he spotted a few teenage boys, probably high school students, playing nearby.

He felt at first a strong urge to go over and stop them, but then immediately checked himself. He thought, *This is a good chance to practice self-control. I'll hold my peace until I find a better solution.* Settling back down, he resumed his work.

A short while later, the ball-playing stopped, only to be replaced by the deafening crackle of firecrackers. Concentration was impossible now.

He stood up to make some coffee and then walked to the door again. As the coffee brewed, its rich aroma slowly filled the room, softening the frustration that had been building inside him. An idea struck him: *Why not invite them in for a cup?*

"Hey, kids," he called, "want to come in, take a break, and have some coffee?"

The boys exchanged surprised looks but then sauntered into the office, moving with casual ease. Each took a cup, a mixture of disbelief and



curiosity on their faces.

"Principal, were we bothering you by playing here?" one of the boys asked awkwardly.

"It was a little loud," he admitted, then added, "Maybe you could play on the sports field? It has more room, too."

The boys gave slight nods, clearly on board. After finishing their coffee, they left looking satisfied.

Watching them walk away, Li felt a warm sense of satisfaction. He recalled something a teacher had once said during a study group session with members of the Tzu Chi Teachers Association: "Giving others leeway often gives yourself a way out."

Many conflicts begin with a moment of impulse. But if you pause, let the anger subside, and choose a different approach, even a situation on the verge of confrontation can turn toward a peaceful resolution. It is often in that brief pause that unnecessary regret is prevented.





A Zimbabwe Legend

Tino Chu and His Well-Drilling Team

Text and photos by Felicia Hsu

Edited and translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

Taiwanese businessman Tino Chu was robbed four times in Zimbabwe and lost almost everything, yet he went on to become the "Well Digger" who, together with his team, has brought life-sustaining water to an estimated eight million people.

In the 1990s, Taiwanese business owners in South Africa constantly faced the threat of kidnapping. The lure of profit was strong in the country, but the risks were high. "Every time I escorted a truck delivering goods from Newcastle to Johannesburg, my wife worried the whole way," recalled Tino Chu (朱金財). "She couldn't relax until I was safely back home."

In one alarming incident, robbers attacked a Taiwanese businesswoman and poured scalding water over her. The news sent chills through Chu. "It was horrifying," he said. "We never learned whether she survived."

As public safety continued to deteriorate, Chu began exploring opportunities in Zimbabwe. He found Zimbabweans gentle and polite, and the



A crew from Tzu Chi's well-drilling team in Zimbabwe repairs a well in a rural area, with Tino Chu (left) supervising from the side.

perous agriculture. It also boasted one of the highest education levels on the continent—surpassed only by Seychelles, South Africa, and Mauritius—with literacy exceeding 90 percent. By the time Chu arrived in 1995, however, the nation's glory days were fading.

The country's gradual decline was severely compounded in 2000 by a controversial land reform policy, implemented after two decades of Black rule, which reclaimed most of the land previously controlled by White owners and redistributed it. Major Western nations condemned the policy as a violation of property rights and imposed sanctions. Zimbabwe's economy swiftly plummeted: Foreign debt soared, prices skyrocketed, and rampant hyperinflation eventually forced the country to abandon the Zimbabwean dollar in 2009 in favor of adopting the U.S. dollar and South African rand.

Zimbabwean society, however, was already experiencing unrest before the land reforms. Frustrated by the government's performance and worsening economic conditions, citizens took to the streets, smashing and looting businesses. After Chu relocated to the country, his businesses were robbed a total of four times in 1997 and 1998. "The first three times," he recalled, "only our stores were looted, which we could manage—we still had stock in the warehouses and could reopen quickly. But the fourth time, even the factory and warehouses were emptied. I was so distraught I couldn't even cry."

Chu's father-in-law in Taiwan issued a directive: Return immediately to Taiwan. "If you refuse to come back, it's fine," he said, "but my daughter, the children, and the grandchildren must all come back." Chu felt his dignity insulted and refused his demands.

Fortunately, his wife, Li Zhao-qin (李照琴), remained his unwavering support, fully backing every decision he made. They sold their house in South Africa—their last remaining asset. With the money from the sale, Chu, who had built his

social atmosphere more welcoming than in South Africa. It felt like a place where one could truly settle down. As a result, he gradually shifted his business focus to Zimbabwe and rebuilt his life there.

After four robberies

Zimbabwe, formerly known as Rhodesia, was once called the breadbasket of Africa for its pros-

fortune from scratch in Africa, staged a comeback and eventually rose from rock bottom.

Before that, however, Chu wondered why, despite being an honest businessman, he had repeatedly encountered misfortune. Could he somehow turn his luck around? He decided to try doing good deeds to see whether that would make a difference. So, at the end of 1998, the year of his fourth robbery, he began distributing aid wherever it was needed, based on reports from his employees. He distributed bread, school supplies, clothing, and anything else that could help.

Chu also happened to be a qualified traditional Chinese therapy practitioner. Using his skills in massage therapy, he was able to help many people in a country with limited medical resources. As word spread, more people sought his expertise. Some of the Zimbabweans he helped later joined him in charitable work.

In 2003, he discovered Tzu Chi's Da Ai TV channel in Zimbabwe. As he watched it, he realized that what he was doing was very similar to Tzu Chi's work. He began thinking of himself as a Tzu Chi volunteer. In 2005, he traveled to South Africa for formal training and officially joined the foundation. He received his certification as a Tzu Chi volunteer in 2011. Dharma Master Cheng Yen's teachings helped him understand the true purpose and meaning of charitable work. He stopped doing good deeds just to improve his luck—and yet, his luck really did change for the better.

Women power in the well-drilling team

As Tino Chu's charitable work expanded, so did Tzu Chi's reputation in Zimbabwe. And yet, the country's challenges were often worse than he could have expected. Over the past 35 years, Zimbabwe has experienced five major droughts, three of them connected to the El Niño phenomenon. The most severe struck between 2023 and 2024, leaving about half the population in need of food. To make matters worse, the resulting lack of clean water and poor sanitation triggered the worst cholera outbreak the country had seen in 15 years.

Through years of helping the needy in rural areas, Chu often saw and heard of women risking their lives to fetch water. Some sources were

extremely remote; many children had their schooling interrupted because they had to help their families collect water. At times, people even had to compete with animals for access to water.

During a report to Master Cheng Yen, Chu shared his concern over these situations. The Master immediately and compassionately encouraged him to become "Zimbabwe's well digger."

Chu began organizing local volunteers into a well-drilling team, breaking traditional gender barriers in the process: Anyone willing to join, male or female, was welcome. In 2024, a Da Ai TV crew from Taiwan joined some team members on one of their well projects. As part of the TV crew, I witnessed firsthand that half of those on the trip were women. I was impressed by how they handled physically demanding tasks, such as setting up machinery, carrying pipes, drilling, and installing pumps, all with strength and dedication.

Lufina Feresi, a water engineer with Zimbabwe's Rural Infrastructure Development Agency, said, "Training women to work in well drilling is one of the policies encouraged by the government. We're very happy to see that Tzu Chi has contributed significantly to empowering local women in this area."

The oldest woman on Tzu Chi Zimbabwe's well-drilling team is 54-year-old Loveness Compound, who also works at Tzu Chi's Zimbabwe office. In 2010, she developed a thyroid condition, and doctors warned she might not live long. She was introduced to Chu in 2012 and, through massage and natural therapies, gradually regained her health. Out of gratitude, she devoted herself fully to Tzu Chi's work.

Steady and reliable, Loveness has become Chu's trusted assistant. She manages food supplies for Tzu Chi's hot meal stations while also lending her strength to well-drilling and repair projects. Her story has inspired many, including her niece, Margret Compound.

"For me, Tzu Chi is very different from other organizations," said Margret. "It gives me a sense of home." She often serves as an emcee at Tzu Chi events, seamlessly switching between English and Shona, one of Zimbabwe's official

Tino Chu (center), his wife, Li Zhao-qin (third from left), and other Tzu Chi volunteers pose with a family in Domboshava—a blind grandmother and her grandchildren—during a visit to deliver supplies and offer emotional support.



Quick Facts on the Republic of Zimbabwe

Geography: A landlocked country in southern Africa, Zimbabwe covers 390,000 km² (roughly the size of Japan). Its terrain is mostly a high plateau, rising higher in the central and eastern regions.

Population: Approximately 14.54 million people, primarily from the Shona and Ndebele ethnic groups.

Economic Challenges: Heavy foreign debt led to money printing to cover deficits, triggering severe hyperinflation. In 2008, the official inflation rate reached 230 million percent. The U.S. dollar is the main currency in use today.

Public Health: Drought has severely affected access to water. According to 2024 UN statistics, only 25 percent of the population has access to safely managed drinking water.



In 2025, Tzu Chi acquired a new well-drilling truck (left), enabling volunteers to work with the latest technology. Each well takes about a week to drill, with over 20 pipes driven into the bedrock. The work requires patience and teamwork.

Admired for his water well expertise and integrity, Tino Chu is regarded by younger volunteers in Zimbabwe as both a mentor and a father figure (right).

languages. She also assists with communication and coordination when Tzu Chi works with government agencies and is an active member of the well-drilling team.

Another valuable member

The team also includes a young man who quietly stands out—Isaac Nyarukokora. Like Loveness and Margret, he is a certified Tzu Chi volunteer and an employee at Tzu Chi Zimbabwe. Not yet 30, Isaac is slight in build, yet can often be found doing all kinds of tasks within the team. One of his most important responsibilities is identifying and testing suitable locations for drilling.

Zimbabwe has various traditional methods for locating water, such as using copper rods, but these are highly unreliable. Accurate, scientific approaches are therefore important. Isaac is the team's skilled specialist in this regard.

"Isaac is excellent," Chu said proudly. "Even government agencies now come to him for help." Testing possible locations of water requires time and patience, as measurements often need to be repeated across the same area. Isaac meticulously takes manual readings step by step while also gathering data through specialized instruments.

Because of knee degeneration, Chu no longer travels to rural sites to personally survey potential water sources. But from the Tzu Chi office in Harare, he can review Isaac's data on his phone and assess whether a site is suitable for drilling. Isaac's help makes him a truly valuable asset to the team, though he humbly credits Chu for his knowledge in this area.



Like a family

Chu's expertise in well drilling is one reason the team deeply trusts his guidance, even though he is a businessman by trade and had no background in water engineering. When he first began well drilling, he found outsourcing the task to engineering companies prohibitively expensive. Motivated by the need to save costs, he taught himself the necessary techniques, gradually gained experience, and then passed his knowledge on to younger volunteers. Team members often stay close to him, learning from him important water-drilling skills. His skill in interpreting charts and identifying water sources has since been handed down to every member of the well-drilling team.

After the 2024 trip, I visited Zimbabwe again in the fall of 2025 for another reporting assignment. During my time there, I was deeply moved by the family-like bond between Tino Chu and the members of the well-drilling team. Often, I would glance over and see the younger volunteers gathered around him, studying potential water-site charts on his phone. Patiently, he guided them through the graphs, showing them how to interpret the data, make judgments, and decide on the next steps.

One day, at a drilling site in Domboshava, near the capital, a crew spent the entire day driving the drill downward, pushing through layers of rock to confirm the water source. Chu supervised every step from the side, ensuring everything was done carefully. As the sun set, I looked

up and saw the crew clustered around him, laughing and chatting together.

Isaac, who has known Chu since childhood, described him as a father figure. "He guided me as I grew up and taught me a lot about locating and digging water wells," Isaac said. "I can't thank him enough." Another team member, Biggie Samson, serves as Tzu Chi Zimbabwe's point of contact for documenting work while also contributing to the well-drilling mission. When he was 17, he lost both parents and was so overwhelmed with grief that he considered ending his life. Upon learning this, Chu brought him from the countryside to Harare, took him into his home, and gave him access to the internet and a computer. Today, Biggie is skilled in video editing and has a family of his own. Speaking of Chu, he said, "He gave me a job and has always been there for me. He's like my father."

Chu has a habit of bringing children home to "raise." One of them is Raymond Jasi, a boy who was filmed fetching water by a Da Ai TV crew ten years ago. A decade later, after Raymond and his father moved north to Harare in search of better job opportunities and settled on the city's outskirts, the father grew concerned that a brothel across the street might lead Raymond astray. He asked Chu to take Raymond into Tzu Chi. Raymond now lives in the dormitory at the Tzu Chi office and has officially joined the well-drilling team, learning how to locate water sources under Isaac's guidance.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Chu contracted the virus and nearly died. His health has declined since, and knee degeneration now limits his mobility. "They don't let me go to rural sites anymore," Chu said. "The roads are too rough, and by the time we arrive, the bumpy ride leaves my body aching so much that I can't even get out of the vehicle."

Even so, he goes to the office every day. The first thing he does when he arrives is to make three prostrations before the statue of Guan Yin Bodhisattva. Then he moves to the dining area, turns on the audio player, and lets Buddhist chants fill the space. Only then does he make his way to the work area and respond to volunteers' questions, one by one. He can be stern—some-

times scolding them for mishandling tasks—but everyone still treats him with deep respect.

Seeing Chu walking slowly through the office, calling out a volunteer's name in his deep voice, felt like stepping into a family home. Isn't this what family is like? "Now, if they notice I've been silent in the office for two hours," Chu said, "they'll come check on me." After all he has gone through—COVID and episodes of shock—the younger volunteers care for him and watch over him with the thoughtfulness one would give a beloved aging father.

Target: 5,000 wells

In early October 2025, shortly after I returned to Taiwan from Zimbabwe, Chu shared some exciting news: Tzu Chi's well-drilling team in Zimbabwe had received official recognition from the central government. From now on, drilling or repairing wells in rural areas would be much smoother, as communicating with local authorities would be easier. "We should be able to reach our goal of drilling or repairing 5,000 wells by the end of 2026," he said. "We'll be ahead of schedule!"

In 2024, Chu's wife was officially certified as a Tzu Chi volunteer. Always a steadfast support behind her husband, she began accompanying him on trips to care for underprivileged households. She also teaches local volunteers how to sing Tzu Chi songs in Mandarin, looking up the Romanized spellings of the words online. For many years, the couple's conversations have revolved around Tzu Chi.

In September 2025, during the groundbreaking ceremony for Tzu Chi's Jing Si Hall in Zimbabwe, Chu said, "When my life ends, I want to be buried in this land. In my next life, I will sit with you, sharing the same skin color, dedicating my all to Zimbabwe." Choked with emotion, he spoke these words with profound affection, offering a heartfelt pledge of his enduring bond with Zimbabwe.

This is the legend of compassion that Tino Chu, a Taiwanese businessman, has built over three decades alongside the people of Zimbabwe—and the ripple effect continues to grow.



Tzu Chi Operations in Zimbabwe

Water Resources

Total Wells Completed: 4,115

(FROM NOVEMBER 11, 2013, TO OCTOBER 31, 2025)

• **Repaired: 3,828** • **Newly Built: 287**

Team: Five crews, each with 30 members

Impact: Each well serves roughly 400 households, benefiting an estimated **eight million** people (assuming five people per household).

Food Distribution

Food Stations Established: 54

Daily Meals Served: 17,000–20,000

Volunteer Development

Certified Tzu Chi Volunteers: 212

Community Volunteers: 3,103

(AS OF NOVEMBER 8, 2025)

Many people make long daily journeys to fetch water; a well can transform their lives.



Healing in Exile

Dental Care for Gaza's Young Patients in Jordan

Text and photos by Lamiya Lin

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting

All the hospitals capable of providing cancer treatment in Gaza were destroyed by war. A group of families with children battling cancer thus made their way to Jordan for treatment with the help of medical and charitable organizations. Tzu Chi provided free dental care, standing by the families during the difficult time.



Between October 7, 2023, and October 13, 2025, during the conflict between Israel and Hamas, roughly 68,000 people were killed in Gaza. Over a quarter of them were children. Everyone says, “Children are our hope for the future,” but in that span, 18,430 children perished before they could see that future.

The conflict also displaced 1.9 million people, including families who arrived in Amman, Jordan, with children battling cancer and urgently needing treatment. Supported by multiple humanitarian organizations, medical care for these children continued despite the war. Tzu Chi was invited to provide free dental care for the families, offering a moment of relief amid immense hardship.

Collaborative relief

Jordan has a population of about 11 million and has long hosted refugees fleeing regional conflicts, including those displaced by the Syrian civil war. Many of the Syrian refugees have gradually returned home since the 13-year conflict ended in December 2024. Jordan is also home to approximately 2.4 million Palestinian refugees, who have arrived over the years since the 1948 Arab-Israeli War and are now spread across 13 refugee camps.

The organization Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP) has operated in Jordan for 35 years, primarily serving Palestinian refugees without Jordanian citizenship. In June 2025, Tzu Chi began partnering with MAP to provide financial support for medical treatment to this community. On September 15, MAP informed Tzu Chi that 127 families from Gaza needed help. Six days later, Tzu Chi volunteers met with MAP staff to assess the families’ situations. The volunteers included Chen Chiou Hwa (陳秋華), Mohamed Khir Alriz, Khader Khalifeh, and Dr. Amjad Othman (from the Tzu Chi International Medical Association), as well as myself.

The families were housed in 12 hotels and supported by multiple international organizations. One such organization, the St. Jude Global Alliance Online Community, is based in the United States and provides critical support for children with cancer. They have long collaborat-

ed with the World Health Organization and the United Nations Children’s Fund USA. Additional assistance came from the King Hussein Cancer Center in Jordan, the King Salman Relief and Humanitarian Aid Center in Saudi Arabia, and the Mariam Foundation, a Palestinian non-profit headquartered in Israel.

While these organizations provided comprehensive aid—covering treatment, accommodations, and living expenses—they did not address the medical needs of accompanying relatives or non-cancer treatments for the children, such as dental care.

To fill this gap, the Jordan chapter of the Tzu Chi International Medical Association, which has been serving the poor and refugees in the country for 16 years, decided to provide free dental care for the families. On October 15, a mobile dental clinic was set up at the Al Fanar Hotel, complete with generators, compressors, and dental chairs. The following day, ten dentists and Tzu Chi volunteers began service at nine in the morning, ultimately treating 107 patients.

Three special cases required referral to larger hospitals. One was four-year-old Hisham, who had suffered severe burns from an explosion before leaving Gaza. His mother shared that he had endured six months of tooth pain, crying every night, yet had refused to let strangers see his face or open his mouth for examination—a truly heart-wrenching situation.

A hellish escape

The Gaza Strip—a narrow stretch of land 41 kilometers (25 miles) long and ten kilometers wide—borders the Mediterranean Sea to the west, is tightly sealed by Israel to the north and east, and touches Egypt at its southern end. Its population includes both native Gazans and people who had fled there from other parts of Palestine.

Life for the 2.3 million people crowded into this besieged enclave had been harsh and confining before the war, yet they remained determined not to leave. Residents had endured repeated clashes with Israel, each one plunging them into crises of water, electricity, food, and medical supplies. More than 60 percent of the

population lived below the poverty line, surviving on UN relief, small home-based work, and subsistence farming.

Then, on October 7, 2023, the Islamist militant group Hamas, the de facto ruler of Gaza since 2007, launched an attack on Israel, shocking the world. Israel struck back. Over the next two years, the Gaza Strip was subjected to relentless, indiscriminate airstrikes. An estimated 70,000 tons of bombs were dropped. Ninety percent of residents fled repeatedly from place to place in an effort to escape the bombardment. Sixty-eight thousand people were killed, 170,000 were wounded, and 14,000 went missing. Eighty-five percent of buildings were damaged. All the educational and medical facilities in the area became inoperable.

Twenty-nine-year-old Shaima Zaarab, a mother of six, left Gaza for Jordan in the middle of the war so that her 13-year-old daughter, Suheir, who suffered from leukemia, could receive treatment. Their story is harrowing.

In Gaza, with no fuel and no transportation, Shaima had previously pushed her daughter to the hospital on a tricycle. One night, bombs fell like rain, as if the world were ending. As the airstrikes intensified, people ran from their homes into the streets. Many were separated from their families in the chaos. Shaima told her children, "Hold hands tightly! Keep running forward and don't stop! Don't look back! If your father and I die, you must live on." The family fled south. Her husband, who had previously lost an arm and a leg in an airstrike, could barely move.

When the family reached southern Gaza, they lived on the beach in a makeshift shelter pieced together from blankets and plastic sheets. For six months, they washed only with seawater. For three months, they did not eat a single piece of bread. They endured winter storms and scorching summer heat that reached 40°C (104°F). They eventually returned home, but found nothing but ruins. Then, in May 2025, the last hospital in Gaza that still provided cancer treatment was bombed and destroyed. For the sake of her daughter, Shaima had no choice but to leave Gaza.

Shaima was eight months pregnant when they arrived in Jordan. Suheir told her soon-to-deliver

mother, "I want to name my baby sister Siwar. That way, if I die, she'll remember me—she'll remember that her sister gave her that name."

Their only wish

The people of Gaza have developed a steadfast faith after years of blockade and bombardment, entrusting everything to Allah. The families I interviewed spoke about their experiences with remarkable composure—no complaints, no pleading. They shared their stories with gentle smiles and repeated words of gratitude. Their acceptance of suffering was beyond anything I could have imagined.

Forty-three-year-old Shahinaz Kaskin's daughter Rahaf was diagnosed with brain cancer just as the war erupted, when she was ten. They quickly applied to the Gaza Ministry of Health for permission to leave the country for treatment. Their first stop was Egypt, where Rahaf underwent tumor-removal surgery; two months later, she was transferred to Jordan's King Hussein Cancer Center to continue her care. "Thanks be to Allah, her condition has stabilized," Shahinaz said of her daughter. "However, she's lost her sight and is now confined to bed."

Shahinaz's other children remained in Gaza. When she left, her youngest daughter was just 20 months old. "We've been in Jordan for a year and seven months now," she said. "We pray that Allah will allow our family to be reunited safely. The hardest part of being here is the separation—constantly worrying about our loved ones back home. But we are grateful to Allah and to the kind people here for taking such good care of us. We thank the Jordanian people and King Abdullah II for their support for Gaza's children with cancer."

Just two weeks before Tzu Chi's free dental clinic, Shahinaz faced another crisis. She was rushed to Akila Hospital with severe abdominal pain. There, she was diagnosed with gallstones. "I had surgery," she said, "and the Tzu Chi Foundation helped pay for it. May Allah bless all of you. I now feel healthier every day. I'm deeply grateful for everything you are doing for the Palestinian people."

Despite all they have endured, the families



have not lost their passion for life. Their hopes rest on their children recovering from cancer. After that, they plan to return to Gaza and rebuild their homes. None expressed any desire to remain in Jordan, even with the safety and comfort it offers. Even when a child passes away, family members apply to cross the border as soon as the three-day mourning period ends. Going home is their only wish.

This is not the first time Gaza has faced devastation—it is the 15th since the Arab-Israeli War of 1948. And despite the signing of a ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas in October 2025, the current round of violence has not fully ended; sporadic airstrikes and gunfire have continued. The families from Gaza know that when they return, they will find their homes reduced to rubble. Yet even if they must live in tents and rebuild with their bare hands, they are determined to go

A volunteer provides oral health education to a child from Gaza at the free dental event held by Tzu Chi in Amman, Jordan, in October 2025.

back. Even if famine and severe shortages await them, nothing can deter their longing for home. Even if they must dig out the remains of their loved ones with their bare hands, they are resolved to bury them with dignity.

Steadfast as bedrock

Dr. Amjad prepared many small gifts for the children who came to Tzu Chi's dental event, filling the venue with warmth. He also promised that any patients needing follow-up care could visit his clinic for free treatment. Tzu Chi would also cover the cost for special dental needs, such as dentures.



Dentist Zaid Hamdan, 26, said he felt honored, as a member of the Tzu Chi International Medical Association, to care for the people from Gaza. "I provide services such as extractions, fillings, fluoride treatments, and cleanings at the event," he said. "I'm grateful that Tzu Chi created this opportunity. I hope this service continues. We'll stand with you."

Mahmoud Ashour, a 31-year-old relative of a young cancer patient, had arrived in Jordan in May 2024. His three-year-old niece, Judi, has cancer in her left eye, but her parents were unable to obtain exit permits. Mahmoud had no choice but to leave his wife and three children in Gaza and bring his niece to Amman for treatment.

"Living under the shadow of this brutal war, we suffer tremendously, whether we stay in Gaza or leave it," he said in an interview. "On behalf of the families of Gaza's children with cancer staying at the Al Fanar Hotel, I offer my deepest thanks to the Tzu Chi Foundation for helping ease our pain."

Dental professionals from the Tzu Chi International Medical Association and other Tzu Chi volunteers, including Syrian refugees, pose with thumbs up at the dental event, showing their enthusiasm to serve.

We often see through the media how deeply Gazans love their homeland. But meeting them face-to-face for the first time and hearing their stories left me even more profoundly affected. Their resilience and unwavering faith, passed down through generations, feel as solid as bedrock even under the suffocating pressure of war.

I hope to speak for those who cannot speak, to preserve the stories of those who have suffered; their deaths or suffering should not be reduced to statistics. The care we offered the Gazans brought them a measure of comfort, and in return, their inner calm touched us. It was a moment of genuine human connection—proof that kindness and care can flow freely through this world, across races and beyond religion.

Humanitarian Crisis in the Gaza Strip

- **2005** – Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip, ending 38 years of military control.
- **2007** – Hamas took control of Gaza, prompting Israel and Egypt to impose a strict border blockade that severely limited movement, crippled the economy, and left the population heavily dependent on international aid.
- **Oct. 2023** – Hamas launched an attack on Israel. Israel responded with extensive airstrikes and a full blockade, causing widespread destruction and severe humanitarian hardship.
- **Oct. 2025** – A ceasefire went into effect. Estimates at this time suggested that around 68,000 people in Gaza had died as a result of the conflict.

Tzu Chi Relief Efforts

- **Hot Meal Distributions:** Beginning in September 2025, Tzu Chi Türkiye partnered with the Taipei Grand Mosque and used donations from students, parents, and teachers at El Menahil International School to distribute hot meals in Gaza. With this effort, Palestine became the 137th country or region to receive Tzu Chi aid.
- **Medical Assistance:** Tzu Chi Jordan, in coordination with Medical Aid for Palestinians, provided free dental care in October 2025 to families of children with cancer from Gaza, serving **107** people. Planned follow-up efforts included transporting medicines to Gaza hospitals in collaboration with the Jordan Hashemite Charity Organization and the Royal Medical Services.





From Candles to Solar Lamps

Bringing Light to Johannesburg's Underserved Communities

By Lu Yue-xia and Yi Yi Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting Photos courtesy of Lu Yue-xia

Without electricity, households in some impoverished settlements in South Africa spent their nights in complete darkness. Their lives changed significantly after Tzu Chi installed solar lights.

Nights are often pitch-dark in several impoverished communities on the outskirts of Johannesburg, South Africa. Without electricity, families rely on candles, kerosene lamps, or the dim glow of mobile phones for light—costly solutions that also carry fire risks.

This was the reality for Sipati in the Kanana community. One of her children, Hope, a Tzu Chi scholarship recipient, often had to study late into the night to do well in school. Candles were both dangerous and costly, but the family had no alternative.

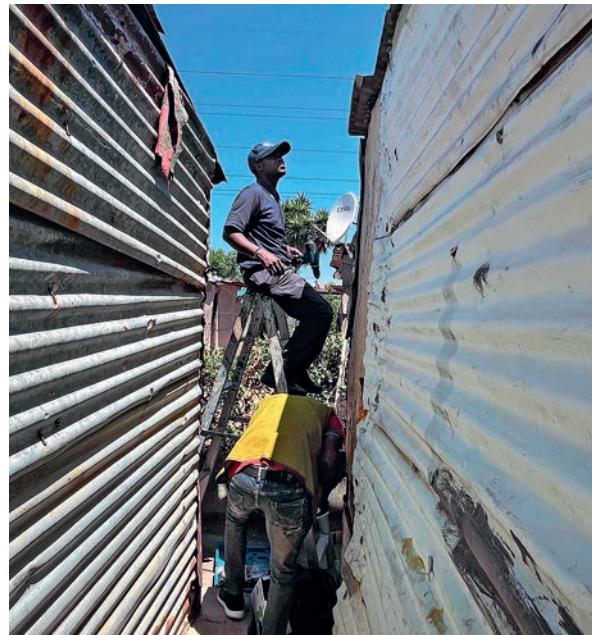
Sipati used to live with her husband, but his drinking led to frequent fights at home. She eventually left him to raise their eight-member family alone in a small room rented for 800 South African rand (about US\$45) per month. Four children shared a double bed, and the others slept on the floor. Two elementary-school-aged children crowded around a tiny table to do their homework.

On October 16, 2025, Tzu Chi volunteers installed solar lighting in their home. Sipati was moved to tears. The light was more than illumination—it was a symbol of hope for her and her children.

Tzu Chi South Africa received a donation of more than 200 solar lighting units in 2024 and began installing them in disadvantaged households in 2025, helping families find light in the darkness.

Another beneficiary of this project was a single mother supporting three children through temporary work and recycling. Her 14-year-old daughter dreams of becoming a lawyer and speaking up for her community. With the solar lighting installed by Tzu Chi, that dream suddenly feels a little closer.

Zandile, a volunteer from Sophiatown, also benefited from the solar technology. She volunteers weekly at a Tzu Chi feeding station or at the Tzu Chi Exercise Room in Phomolong, Thembisa, a facility that supports stroke survivors and injured patients with rehabilitation routines. When fellow volunteers learned that she quietly served others despite her own difficult living conditions, they decided to install solar lighting for her. “At night, we couldn’t see anything,”



Volunteers install solar lighting for a household.

Zandile said. “My children and I were often in complete darkness, sometimes getting by with a few candles.” The lighting greatly improved their quality of life.

Nthombi, who also volunteers at the Exercise Room, is a long-term recipient of Tzu Chi’s aid. Her home is accessible via a path strewn with trash; the refuse, along with stagnant water, gives off an almost unbearable stench in hot weather. When volunteers walked this path to her place on October 16 to install solar lighting, their hearts went out to the residents living in such conditions. Upon entering Nthombi’s home, they noticed that the roof was damaged in several places. When asked whether it leaked during rain, she smiled and said, “Yes, it does, but it’s okay.” The clearly visible holes told a more serious story, so the volunteers began making plans for repairs.

When the solar lighting was installed and switched on, the small home overflowed with laughter and heartfelt moments. Nthombi said that because they are now the only family in the area with electricity, she happily welcomes neighborhood children to come over in the evenings to do their homework.



Scholarship Winners Excel Despite Adversity

By Zheng Chun-yan, Yang Zhu-ya, Wang Rui-juan, Wang Mei-ya,
Li Yi-ru, and Zhang Li-yun

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting Photo by Huang Chuan-bi

Thirty-three New Shoots Scholarship award ceremonies were held across Taiwan in late 2025, recognizing 9,400 students who have proven that adversity cannot limit their achievements. For them, receiving assistance is not an endpoint but the beginning of passing love forward.



A New Shoots Scholarship award ceremony held at the Tainan Jing Si Hall, southern Taiwan, on October 26, 2025.

As late autumn gave way to the chill of winter, 33 Tzu Chi New Shoots Scholarship award ceremonies were held across Taiwan, spreading warmth and hope. The 9,400 recipients had done their best to shape their own lives, turning the sweet and bitter experiences of their journeys into nourishment for personal growth. Even in the face of adversity and difficult paths, they continued to move forward with courage.

These promising students come from disadvantaged families, whom Tzu Chi volunteers visit regularly and provide care and support for. With this annual scholarship program, the foundation hopes to inspire recipients to pursue their dreams with confidence and trusts that one day these “new shoots” will grow into trees that offer shade and support to others.

A steady support for her mother

Many recipients of this scholarship shoulder family responsibilities earlier than most of their peers. Xiao-si (not her real name), now a college freshman, is one such student. Her parents divorced when she was in elementary school, and she later moved with her mother and two younger sisters from Hsinchu to New Taipei City. Life during those years was difficult. Worn down by long-term emotional strain, her mother developed anxiety, panic disorder, and major depression. Unable to work, she relied on government assistance and support from Tzu Chi.

As the eldest daughter, Xiao-si understood from a young age that her family needed her. After school, she prepared meals, cleaned, cared for her sisters, and helped them with their homework. “She doesn’t talk much,” her mother said, “but everything she does moves me deeply. No matter how hard life gets, she never complains. Thoughtful and responsible, she is my pride. Without her, our family might not have made it.”

Despite her family’s financial challenges, Xiao-si never allowed her studies to slip. She earned a New Shoots Scholarship in the category of Scholarly Accomplishments for three consecutive years, beginning in her second year of high school. Now in college, she cherishes the opportunity to learn and listens intently in every class,

knowing that once she returns home, there is still much to do.

Tzu Chi volunteer Li Xiu-e (李秀鶯), who has worked with the family for many years, shared that Xiao-si demonstrates impressive dedication and maturity both in school and at home. Her teachers have praised her excellent attitude toward learning and noted that she even takes the initiative to help classmates with their assignments. At home, she becomes her mother’s right hand, never once saying she’s tired. “She’s still so young, yet so sensible,” Li said. “We see her efforts and feel both moved and protective. We want to give her all the encouragement we can.”

At the scholarship award ceremony at the Sanchong Jing Si Hall on October 25, Xiao-si stepped onto the stage to receive her certificate and scholarship money, wearing a shy but determined smile. “Thank you to Tzu Chi and to everyone who has helped us,” she remarked. “I will turn this love into strength, study hard, and give back to society in the future.” She already knows how she will use the scholarship: to purchase professional textbooks, pay certification exam fees, and use the remainder on transportation and meals to ease her mother’s burden.

Studying with purpose

Wei, recently admitted to a university in Taichung, received a scholarship in the category of Academic Improvement during this round of award ceremonies. After his parents’ divorce, his mother raised him and his brother on her own. She woke at 3 a.m. each day to work in a school kitchen, letting the children sleep in a corner until it was time for school. In the evenings, she made dumplings at home to earn extra income, with Wei always by her side helping her.

Tzu Chi volunteers in Chiayi have supported the family since 2013. With their encouragement, Wei’s mother opened a small food stall three years ago, finally having a business of her own. Volunteer Lin Hui-min (林惠民) often saw Wei helping at the stall after school, yet he still found time to complete his homework. Despite his responsibilities at home, Wei graduated third in his cohort from high school, showing with his excellent grades that poverty is no barrier to success.

Wei recalls a teacher's words from elementary school, said while he was running laps around the playground: "Keep going—you're almost there!" The phrase became his personal motto, reminding him to persevere. In junior high, his homeroom and English teachers encouraged him further, saying, "Apply yourself in school and you can create a better future." Both messages motivated him to work hard and aim high.

He also remembers his first encounter with Tzu Chi: Volunteers brought vegetarian snacks and holiday gifts to his home. That year, he received a New Shoots Scholarship for perfect attendance. Now a university student, he has set new goals—no tardiness, no leaving early, no casual absences—and hopes to rank among the top ten in his department. "I know how hard my mother works to support our family," he said. "Studying diligently is my way of giving back."

His mother beams with pride at his maturity. In addition to his dedication to schoolwork, he writes heartfelt birthday cards to her and apology notes when he does something wrong. "He is quiet," she said, "but he expresses his love through his actions, which really means a lot to me."

Wei keeps her advice firmly in mind: "We are receiving help now; when you are able, you must give back." He puts this principle into action even as a student, donating money or blood. "In the future, I want to make my family's life better and help others just as Tzu Chi has helped me," he declared.

In Penghu, an archipelago off Taiwan's southwestern coast, Tzu Chi volunteers have been like second mothers to Zheng, another New Shoots Scholarship recipient. They supported him through his youth with patience and kindness, encouraged him to do his best in school, and invited him to participate in Tzu Chi activities. He served as a scorer at Tzu Chi summer camps in high school and joined a tutoring program in college, assisting younger students with their schoolwork. Helping younger students developed in him a deeper appreciation for the sacrifices his grandmother made raising him.

"Originally, my grandmother didn't want me to go to university," he said. "She wanted me to serve in the military and earn a salary to help

ease the family's financial pressure. Thanks to Tzu Chi's educational subsidy program, I was able to attend college." (This program provides financial support to disadvantaged students, covering tuition, room and board, uniforms, books, school supplies, and living expenses so they can focus on their studies.) He conveyed his gratitude to the foundation and vowed to work even harder to become the pillar of his family and a dependable support for his grandmother.

Formal yet heartwarming ceremony

New Shoots Scholarships are awarded to students from elementary school through undergraduate and master's programs, with grants ranging from 3,000 to 12,000 New Taiwan dollars (US\$100–400). They are presented in five categories: Scholarly Accomplishments, Academic Improvement, Filial Piety, Special Achievements, and Perfect Attendance. Yao, a music major at a national university, has received the scholarship for several years. She said Tzu Chi's support has eased her family's burden.

"It is truly something to be grateful for that, in this imperfect world, there are always people like bodhisattvas mending its flaws and spreading warmth wherever they go," she said. She added that every year, when she and other recipients attend a ceremony, Tzu Chi volunteers greet them with warmth and smiles. "They treat us like their own children," she said. "Even though we aren't always good at expressing our gratitude, they give us unconditional love and care."

Yao works part-time during summer vacations and uses her scholarship money to cover airfare for performances in South Korea. She thanked Tzu Chi for helping her pursue her passion and explained how she and her siblings give back: "Every time we receive the scholarship, my younger brother, sister, and I each donate ten percent back to society to pass on the love and kindness. 'Never wait to give back' is the spirit our mother taught us."

Each award ceremony is both warm and dignified. At the Banqiao ceremony on October 24, buses brought students and their families from Taipei's Wenshan District and several areas in New Taipei City to the venue. They passed



through bamboo gates labeled "Peace Gate," "Health Gate," and "Wisdom Gate." Some recipients even served as volunteers, helping with gift packaging and rehearsals from early morning, working side by side with Tzu Chi volunteers. Volunteer Lai Yi-ru (賴怡如) said, "Seeing the children so focused on their tasks, we feel their enthusiasm. I believe they understand that their contributions can make a difference in the lives of others."

A college fair was held at the Taichung Jing Si Hall ceremony on November 1, where scholarship recipients—current college and master's students, along with former recipients who have graduated—shared their schooling experiences with high school students and offered guidance on choosing a college major. Lin Qi-wei (林祺惟), from the Department of Electrical Engineering at the prestigious National Taiwan University, talked to interested students about what an electrical engineering program involves. "Tzu Chi's care and financial support have made me who I am today," he said. "I'm very happy to be here guiding the younger students. I hope my experiences

Senior New Shoots Scholarship recipients share their schooling experiences with high school students and offer guidance on choosing a college major at Taichung Jing Si Hall, November 1, 2025.

SHI LONG-WEN

and advice can help them avoid unnecessary detours."

That day, 397 students received scholarships, with principals from 14 schools in attendance. Wei Zhi-hua (魏志華), principal of Siyi Junior High, thanked Tzu Chi volunteers for their long-standing care for low-income and disabled students: "Even though these families face disadvantages, the support from Tzu Chi volunteers helps the children maintain a positive mindset." Ke Zhi-ming (柯志明), principal of Wenxin Elementary, also praised Tzu Chi's support, noting it ensures children from underprivileged families do not feel alone on their educational journey. He offered his best wishes to the scholarship recipients, hoping they can "study happily and with peace of mind." ♦

The Happiness of Finally Seeing the Floor

By Yang Wen-fu and Tao Su-lian

Translated by Wu Hsiao-ting Photo by Li Yan-yu

In late September 2025, a mudflow triggered by the overflow of a barrier lake devastated Guangfu Township in Hualien County, eastern Taiwan. The authors of this article joined the cleanup efforts that followed, witnessing the suffering of residents yet experiencing the joy of giving.

On September 23, Guangfu Township, Hualien, was devastated by the overflow of a barrier lake, blanketing parts of the town in thick layers of mud. On September 28, our group of more than 40 Hsinchu residents arrived to help with cleanup efforts.

Stepping out of Guangfu Station, we were met by a flood of volunteers from all over Taiwan. Their numbers far exceeded our expectations, a heartwarming testament to how the disaster, though unfortunate, had unleashed a great deal of compassion and solidarity.

As we moved deeper into the town, we saw many houses displaying cardboard signs that read, "We need volunteers." We all wished we had superhuman strength so we could help every single household.

Dodging mini skid loaders at work, we wound our way down the road with tools in hand. Our boots and pant legs were soon coated in mud, even though we hadn't even begun working. When we reached the house assigned to our team, we observed a straight waterline mark at shoulder height running across one wall. It was a stark reminder of the nightmare the homeowner had endured. Nearly 40 centimeters (15 inches) of sludge still blanketed the first floor, with furniture half-buried in the mire.

At first glance, the cleanup didn't look too difficult. But with the very first shovelfuls, we quickly discovered how stubborn the sludge

was—shifting yet heavy, soft on top yet packed firm beneath. It was anything but easy to clear. Even so, working together and coordinating closely, we soon settled into a steady rhythm. Everyone kept their heads down, pushing ahead, while the Tzu Chi brothers and sisters working alongside us reminded us from time to time to drink water and stay safe.

Our clothes were soon soaked with sweat, but each wheelbarrow we pushed out, brimming with mud, lifted our morale. As the terrazzo floor slowly emerged, our team felt a surge of joy, as if hope itself were breaking through the mud. And the smile on the homeowner's face was the finest reward we could have asked for.

The next day, we saw military personnel and police directing traffic along the roads. Operating large machinery during the day was difficult with so many volunteers working, so the military and government agencies focused on clearing heavy debris at night. Work in the disaster area was thus carried out both day and night. We also saw young soldiers carrying waterlogged furniture, a truly demanding task.

Our group from Hsinchu managed to clean ten homes over three days. Some were completely filled with mud. We witnessed firsthand the toll on residents: Some elderly residents refused to come downstairs to face the damage, while other homeowners' eyes were red with sadness. Every scene left a deep impression because we



saw it with our own eyes.

Our bodies were exhausted and sore at the end of each day, but our spirits felt light. Along the way back to the station, we were constantly thanked for our efforts. Kind-hearted people even offered bread, steamed buns, drinking water, fruit, and pain-relief patches. It all truly warmed our hearts. Two large barrels of water in front of the station allowed us to rinse our boots, and we could even be sprayed with disinfectant. Taiwan Railway ran several extra trains to transport the "shovel superheroes," a term used for the cleanup volunteers. Each carriage was coated in dust, yet after returning to Hualien, the trains were cleaned and sent out again—an impressive testament to the dedication of the railway staff.

Because we had signed up with Tzu Chi for the cleanup, we were able to spend nights at the dormitories in the Hualien Jing Si Hall, a first-time experience for us. While eating boxed dinners provided by the foundation, we observed more than 200 Tzu Chi volunteers reviewing the day's work, checking progress item by item, and coordinating resources for the next steps. We were impressed by how Tzu Chi volunteers applied the planning and management skills of

Volunteers from Tzu Chi and all parts of Taiwan rushed to Guangfu Township to help clean up after the mudflow. Here, a group takes a moment for a photo.

running a business to disaster relief. No wonder people often praise Tzu Chi for its organization and efficiency!

In the disaster zone, Tzu Chi volunteers in uniform were everywhere, a calming, stabilizing presence. Wherever there is need, Tzu Chi is there. Even those who could not help personally in the disaster area contributed through donations, keeping a powerful current of goodwill flowing strong and full.

This was our first time taking part in a Tzu Chi volunteer effort. From the initial call for volunteers onward, everything—from our schedules and transportation to our accommodations and the thoughtfully prepared vegetarian meals—was arranged with remarkable order. Behind it all was a support team as solid as a rock. Thanks to such strong and reliable backing, volunteers like us could focus entirely on the work before us and contribute in whatever small ways we could. ♣

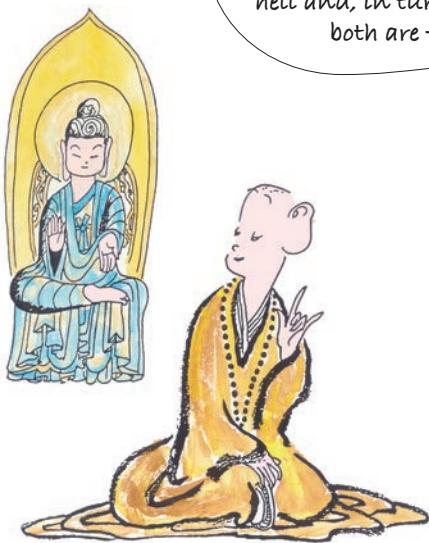
The JING SIA Illustrated APHORISMS

The Buddha says:

Speculation on a person's existence after death only leads to confusion and disputes. It makes people angry, unhappy, and miserable. It doesn't help free people from their pain, stop their evil thoughts, or get rid of their desires. It doesn't help people to achieve tranquility, wisdom, enlightenment, or nirvana. Therefore, I never talk about it.



Some people, driven by desire and the pursuit of pleasure, do things that harm others without benefiting themselves. Even after turning to Buddhism, they may become preoccupied with heaven and hell and, in turn, greedily seek merit—both are forms of delusion.



Atheism is better than superstition. We must believe wisely and not run off after every little cult.

Every time I see people suffering, I feel deeply saddened and can't help but want to cry.

Dharma Master Cheng Yen: "Without a compassionate heart, how can anyone be willing to give? Once we have really started to give, then our compassion will be refined to a strong power. Therefore, we must love with wisdom and turn compassion into strength. It is in this way that we will always be able to use our abilities to help others."

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

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It takes wisdom not to inflict suffering on others when one is suffering.—Dharma Master Cheng Yen

PHOTO BY HUANG XIAO-ZHE

A Note About Our Issue Dates

To align with publishing conventions, we are updating the way our bimonthly issues are dated. From this issue onward, each edition will be labeled with the standard cover date (e.g., “February 2026”) rather than the month the issue is printed and distributed. Our publication schedule remains unchanged. Thank you for your understanding and ongoing readership.