



BUDDHIST NUN IS TAIWAN'S MASTER OF INSPIRATION

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RAISING FUNDS, RAISING HEARTS

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Racing Against Time To Com- fort Victims' Souls & Bodies

By Yang Chenron

Tr. by Bill Kwok

Tzu Chi plans to finish building 3000 temporary houses in Taichung and Nantou in the next month as Phase I in the relief efforts following the recent, devastating, earthquake in Taiwan. On September 29th, the first cluster of temporary houses broke ground on public land in Chung Hsing Village of Nantou City. Tzu Chi's Vice-Director Sister Lin Piyu commented, "We are racing against time, working in sunshine or rain. We hope that the temporary houses can be completed as quickly as possible to aid and comfort the victims both emotionally and physically."

Local government provided the land for building the temporary houses. Tzu Chi will construct and furnish the houses, the government will be responsible for utilities, road and drainage system construction and to transfer the houses to qualified victims including relocation of tenants in the future.

Master Cheng Yen has been busy touring the disaster areas in Central Taiwan from September 23rd until early October. When she saw the scared faces of the victims; when she saw that they had to spend nights in the open; when she saw that there was no running water and electricity and when she saw their deteriorating health, her heart ached. She immediately decided to build temporary houses to allow the victims to have, at least, a shelter to begin the healing process. She commented, "With a home and a sense of belonging, their emotional rollercoaster can be stabilized and they can start rebuilding."

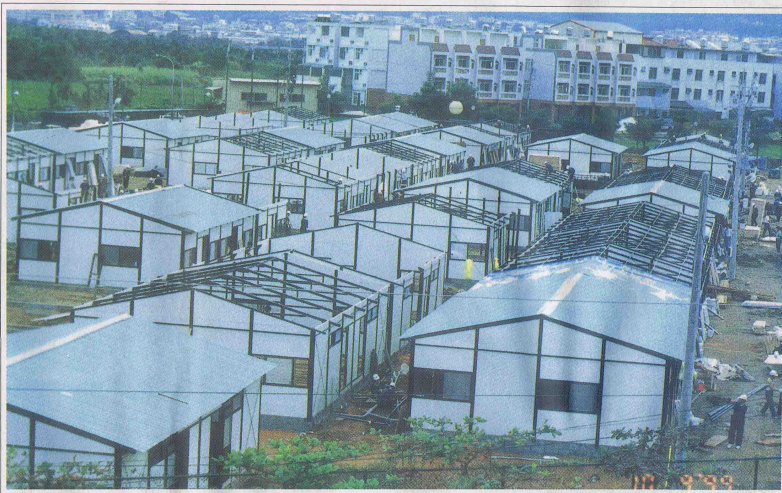
Taichung and Nantou counties as well as the cities provided land in Taichung, Fengyuan, Taifu, Nantou City, Nantou County and Hsao-tun.

Master Cheng Yin selected the locations personally and paid special attention to geological formation, avoiding fault zones and soft soils so that the victims could live peacefully. Other main considerations included convenience and proximity to damage areas. "Right now the victims do not have anything. We choose the center of cities so that they can easily receive whatever they need daily. Also, with safety in mind, it is easier for them to rebuild if they are close to their damaged homes," said Master Cheng Yen.

When they learned that Tzu Chi was building houses for them, the victims volunteered to help with the construction. Master Cheng Yen was very impressed and praised them, "Putting in effort to build one's own home is both wise and a blessing." Several contractors also volunteered to assist in creating building pads and testing the soil. Many pre-manufactured housing contractors lowered prices voluntarily and hurried to gather materials.

Starting on September 27th, Tzu Chi volunteers went to victims' homes in a display of their concern for them. The volunteers also conducted a survey on the victims' willingness to live in the temporary houses. The government is now registering victims. Priority will be given to those who suffered total losses and those with low incomes. Upon confirmation by Tzu Chi, qualified victims who are willing to move can enter the new houses.

In order to complete 3000 houses within one month, all Tzu Chi brothers throughout the province are ready to help with the construction. On October 1st, Tzu Chi core brothers in Northern Taiwan had already started learning how to assemble pre-manufactured houses in the Nantou center. This core unit will teach Tzu Chi brothers in other districts.



Houses built by Tzu Chi soothe the heart of hundreds of shaken victims.

Buddhist Group Emerges as Star in Earthquake Relief Effort

The Associate Press

Loading bags of rice and powdered milk into trucks, Taiwan's largest Buddhist charity prepares for another run into remote, earthquake-ravaged mountain villages desperately in need of aid.

Rushing to the sides of survivors, the charity's all-volunteer staff offers counseling to those who lost loved ones in the quake Tuesday that has killed more than 2,000 and injured over 8,500.

The Tzu Chi Buddhist Relief Foundation has emerged as one of the superstars of the disaster, outshining the government in its efficiency, organization — and human touch.

"Let your mother go in peace," said Liao Li-chu, a housewife and foundation volunteer, while gently

hugging a weeping woman whose mother was crushed by a falling wall.

The group says its success stems from volunteers like Liao. There's a legion of them, from prominent businessmen to poor farmers and office clerks who have heeded the call of a self-effacing nun to help the less fortunate.

Tzu Chi says it has gained valuable experience helping disaster victims from Cambodia to South America. Just weeks ago, it sent a contingent to Turkey after an earthquake killed 15,000 people.

Such lessons have served to significantly augment slow and somewhat slipshod relief measures taken by Taiwan's government.

"Many local governments have been a step behind us," said Hu Wucheng, the organization's team leader for central Taiwan.

Refugees say Tzu Chi and other private groups have carried most of the burden for getting them necessary aid supplies.

"Around here we haven't seen much of the government at all. It's been private groups and individuals who have been helping us," said Huang Yi-shiang, a senior at Taipei's Technical University who rushed to join relatives in this quake-ravaged town.

More than 100 residents were killed in Chushan, about 90 miles southwest of the capital, Taipei. Three times that number now live in a tent city where blue-and-white uniformed Tzu Chi volunteers provide medical aid, relief supplies and grief counseling.

The group has delivered more than 10,000 tents, 3,000 sleeping bags and tons of food and household sup-

plies to the hundreds of thousands stricken and homeless. More than 60 Tzu Chi doctors were assisting at hospitals and aid stations.

The group's officials are now trying to help the homeless, working with the government to obtain land on which to erect as many as 1,000 prefabricated homes.

Tzu Chi can act so quickly because of the island-wide network of volunteers and donors established in the 30 years since a nun founded the organization with donations.

The group disperses about \$94.5 million a year for charity work and education. It commands respect for its low-key, apolitical approach and minimal operating costs made possible by requiring that volunteers pay their own expenses.

Tzu Chi is especially important because Taiwan is not a member of the United Nations and cannot get help from U.N. groups. China, a permanent member of the Security Council, claims sovereignty over Taiwan and refuses to allow independent U.N. representation for it.

(The article appeared on CNN web page on September 27, 1999.)

HONDURAS' FIRST LADY FULFILLED HER DREAM

By Fang Yawen & Lee Siao-wen

Tr. by Bill Kwok

"Meeting Master Cheng Yen and wearing a Tzu Chi Commissioner's dress were the most memorable experiences during my visit to Taiwan," said Honduras' First Lady.

In order to show her gratitude for Tzu Chi's relief efforts helping Honduras' people, First Lady Maria, representing the Honduran President, arrived at Tzu Chi's Taipei Branch Office to meet Master Cheng Yen and to express her country's gratitude. Maria said that she was touched when she saw that the 1,330,000 articles of clothing donated by Tzu Chi last February were all washed and neatly folded. In ad-

dition, Tzu Chi volunteers personally handed the clothes directly to the victims with kindness and care. Such an expression of love and consideration deeply impressed the people of Honduras. They felt that the volunteers were "Angels in blue from Taiwan."

Master Cheng Yen explained that all Tzu Chi volunteers, whether in Taiwan or other locations around the world were taught to show respect to each recipient. She also told her that "tzu" (compassion) means giving out happiness; and the purpose of "chi" (relief) was to deliver people from suffering. Compassionate relief is the attitude expressed by Tzu Chi in carrying out its mission of "relieving the poor and educating the rich."

The First Lady stated that, when she saw Tzu Chi volunteers, either in Commissioner's dresses or in blue

shirts and white pants, distributing relief materials in the disaster areas, she sincerely wished that she could also wear a Commissioner's dress and participate in the relief efforts. To fulfill her wish, Master Cheng Yen conferred upon her the right to wear a Tzu Chi Commissioner's dress and had her measurements taken to a tailor.

That same afternoon, when a Tzu Chi Commissioner showed the First Lady the newly tailored Commissioner's dress, she was surprised and moved by the speed and efficiency of the Tzu Chi volunteers. She immediately put it on and tied up her hair in the Tzu Chi style. She promised that if she ever came to Taiwan again to see Master Cheng Yen, she would wear the Tzu Chi Commissioner's dress. She felt hon-

ored in being a Tzu Chi volunteer.

In October of 1998, Hurricane Mitch, the fourth most violent hurricane in the Caribbean's history, had savaged Honduras. Over seven thousand people had been confirmed dead and another 12,000 people simply disappeared. Nearly one quarter of the nation's population, more than 1.39 million people had suffered losses in the disaster. Before the end of December 1998, Tzu Chi had donated anti-infection and preventative care medical equipment to help maintain public hygiene. Last February, Tzu Chi again donated 23 containers of clothing. In addition, Tzu Chi U.S.A. supplied three containers of food, 2000 emergency kits, and provided free medical care for the people.



Are you dreaming of your lost home?
—A young earthquake victim sleeps on the street.

