

Centuries-old ethnic conflict between the Serbs and Albanians forced innocent children from their homes. The refugee outflow was the largest forced migration in Europe since WWII.

1999/7 • Kuo Yi-teh

# TZU CHI FOUNDATION





In Kosovo, a region south of Serbia in the former republic of Yugoslavia, ninety percent of the population are ethnic Albanians, who are governed by the Serbs, the remaining ten percent. For centuries, ethnic Albanians and Serbs have been warring in the region.

In February 1999, Yugoslavia launched a campaign of ethnic cleansing in Kosovo, forcing over 630,000 ethnic Albanians to flee their homes to neighboring countries such as Albania, Macedonia and Montenegro. The outflow of refugees was called the largest forced migration imposed on any ethnic group in Europe since World War II.

When the three-month-long war subsided and the refugees began to return home, over forty percent of the houses in Kosovo had been burned down. More than four hundred international organizations gave assistance to help rebuild the region.

Tzu Chi went to Kosovo four times to investigate the situation and decided to focus on the lack of medicine in the refugee camps. Tzu Chi worked together with Knightsbridge International to send US\$300,000 worth of antibiotics to the camps. In addition, the foundation signed an agreement with Medecins du Monde (MDM) to jointly implement a five-month medical assistance program for the residents of Pristina and its suburbs. The program included the formation of mobile medical teams, establishment of medical stations, reconstruction of thirty hospitals and clinics, post-war psychological counseling, and water source tests. Through Mercy Corps International, Tzu Chi also donated more than two thousand tons of chemical fertilizer to farmers who had returned home.

In the United States, the government had taken in twenty thousand Kosovar refugees. Tzu Chi members in California, Dallas,

## Kosovo

### Refugees

Project time: April 1999-October 1999

Aid provided: Medical assistance, chemical fertilizer and resettlement program



Washington and Seattle devised a plan to help refugees get settled in their new homes. The assistance rendered included free clinics, provision of one month's

daily necessities, and distribution of school supplies for school-age children. The purpose was to help the refugees recover from the trauma of war and adjust to their new environment.

To help fund the Kosovo relief operations, Tzu Chi people around the world launched a fund-raising campaign. Tzu Chi Youth Association members in North America wrote and produced a song called "Love in Kosovo" that was recorded on CDs and sold for charity. "Love is the only solution to ethnic hatred," said Shih Fanghsin, a Tzu Chi Youth member. "Through our efforts, we are saying to the Kosovar refugees that though we may come from different ethnic backgrounds and have different religions from you, we still love and care about you. Perhaps our attitude can help to gradually ease the hatred that has been passed down from one generation to the next and give them hope for love."

Tzu Chi volunteers, like countless workers from other international relief organizations, risked their lives to travel to that strange land. Wearing bullet-proof vests and helmets, they rode in armored cars on roads strewn with land mines, all because they wanted to sow the seeds of hope in a region ravaged by hatred.

A landmine-covered field means war and hatred. Inside the restricted area, military personnel neutralize landmines. But can the hatred in the minds of the war-torn people ever be undone?

1999/8 · Li Yen-hsueh



The refugees look anxiously for names of their families on the list.

1999/8 · Kuo Yi-teh





# TZU CHI FOUNDATION

The joint medical aid program of Medecins du Monde (MDM) and Tzu Chi will provide basic health care for an estimated 250,000 refugees.

1999/7 · Kuo Yi-teh

Their homes have been burnt down and the fields are strewn with landmines. Nonetheless, as they reach home, smiles break out on their rugged faces.

1999/7 · Kuo Yi-teh

# TZU CHI FOUNDATION





