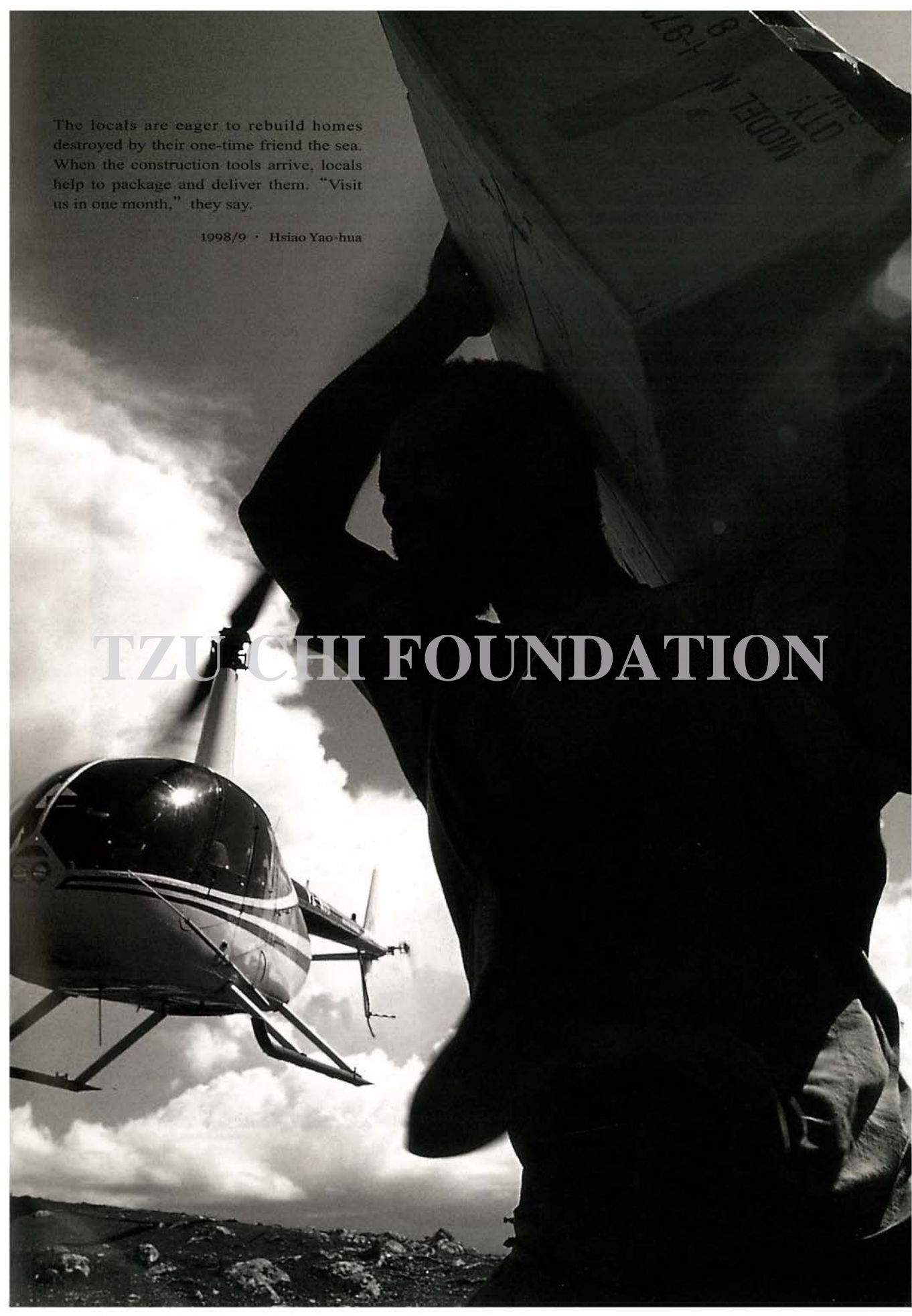


The locals are eager to rebuild homes destroyed by their one-time friend the sea. When the construction tools arrive, locals help to package and deliver them. "Visit us in one month," they say.

1998/9 · Hsiao Yao-hua

TZU CHI FOUNDATION



THE PACIFIC

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Papua New Guinea

On July 17, 1998, a strong earthquake in the northwestern part of Papua New Guinea triggered tsunamis that destroyed over ten villages, resulting in a death toll of more than two thousand people and injuring thousands. Over nine thousand survivors who had become homeless were placed in six temporary shelters.



elevated wood houses most common in the area was easily obtainable. With the right tools, the victims could rebuild the houses themselves.

The catastrophe attracted the attention of the world, and aid poured in to the island. The Tzu Chi branch office in Australia learned that at the Boram Hospital near the disaster area, hundreds of patients with bone fractures had to undergo amputation for lack of proper medical equipment to examine the wounds. They immediately raised funds and donated to the hospital a portable x-ray scanner.

Due to the large number of patients, there was a severe shortage of medical personnel and equipment at Boram Hospital. Eleven volunteer doctors from TIMA (Tzu Chi International Medical Association) in Taiwan, Australia and Hawaii arrived at the hospital in August to support the staff. The doctors also brought and donated badly needed catheters, stethoscopes and sphygmomanometers.

After a general survey, it was found that international relief organizations had responded swiftly to the survivors' needs for daily necessities, but what was still needed were tools for the victims to rebuild their homes. The material used for the

Tsunamis

Project time: July 1998-September 1998

Aid provided: Medical equipment and building tools

To help them rebuild their homes before the rainy season began in October, within two weeks Tzu Chi volunteers purchased two thousand tool kits, each containing a saw, an axe, a shovel, a knife and nails of all sizes. An additional twelve electric saws were given to victims in more urgent need of rebuilding their homes.

When the volunteers handed out the tool kits, which weighed almost nine kilograms each, to the victims, one victim said with tears in his eyes, "Since the disaster, many charity organizations have helped us, but you are the only ones who have personally handed us the relief goods."

"Before the distribution, we flew over the disaster area in a helicopter," a volunteer from Melbourne remarked. "Although it had been two months since the tsunami occurred, the odor of corpses still emanated from a lagoon in which many lives were buried. I was shocked. Therefore when I handed the tool kits to the victims, it was with countless blessings and love in my heart. I have spent the most meaningful time of my life here."



The elevated houses common in the area are built mostly of indigenous natural materials. Therefore the locals get to work right away after they receive their building tools.

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Many of those injured during the tsunami underwent amputation due to wounds that had deteriorated beyond treatment. In this rehabilitation center, adults and children wait together to be fitted for artificial limbs.

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