

Taiwan Volunteer Leads the Way in Water Conservation

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation
Wednesday, 28 March 2012 14:00



For the last seven years, a Tzu Chi volunteer in western Taiwan has been a pioneer in conserving water. She has cut the family's water bill by one third and uses many ways to save and re-use water. She is a model of how everyone can contribute to this important mission.

It was in 2005 that Yu Xue-fang heard a speech by Master Cheng Yen that inspired her. "Dharma Master Cheng Yen said she only uses one washbowl of water every day, therefore we have to learn how she cherishes water," said Yu, who lives with her family of five in Zhanghua. "She once said the streams of the earth have been damaged by humankind, which has caused water shortages. If there is no rainfall for a long time, many places suffer from drought and the governments will soon apply water restrictions. In some countries, people have no water to drink and therefore the Master expects everyone to conserve water. One day, if there is no water at all in the world, the last drop of water will be our own tears," she said. From that day, Yu has always kept the Master's words in her mind.

Compared to other countries, Taiwan is blessed in terms of water: it has many rivers and heavy rainfall and is surrounded by the ocean. But, because it has steep mountains and the rain is often sudden and heavy, most of the water flows into the ocean. With uneven geography and rainfall, some areas of Taiwan suffer from water shortages. In addition, human activity damages the soil and natural conservation; rivers do not flow as they used to.



Armed with this new awareness of the preciousness of water, Yu set about finding new ways to conserve it in her daily life. In her kitchen and bathroom, she has over 10 plastic buckets and washbowls of different sizes. If you look closely, you see that her bath-tub is half-full of water: the water saved there is not clear but has silt which has sunk to the bottom. When she cleans vegetables, she retains the water to use on her plants, for which the water can be dirtier. Since the water from the last rinse is cleaner, she always let it sit for a while, so that the silt will sink to the bottom. The next day, she can re-use the saved water to wash vegetables. She uses the same methods for the showering water. First, she washes off the bubble and collects the last rinse from this water to flush the toilet, mop the floors and clean the furniture. She also collects and re-uses rainwater.

Yu says that the money she saved can help people in need. "We have five people in my family and used to pay NT\$350 every two months. But now we only pay less than half, on average NT\$150 every two months. Once we even paid NT\$113 for the water."