

## Zulu Volunteers Celebrate Buddha Day Ceremony in the Rain

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Volunteers in Durban, South Africa held a Buddha Day ceremony despite heavy rain which threatened to mar the event. Like their Tzu Chi brothers and sisters around the world, they were determined to show their respect and devotion on this important day.

The ceremony was held on May 8 on the lawn at St Ramalinga Hall in the Isipingo district of the city. Just after four o'clock in the morning, the manager of the hall, Chris, sent a text message to the volunteers to say that inside and outside the building were flooded. He asked if the ceremony scheduled for that day could go ahead. The volunteers replied that, however heavy the rain, they were determined to proceed. They put on raincoat and began to make preparations in the rain.

Due to the rain, the stereo equipments were put in the Tzu Chi car, but the wind still could blew the rain into the car. Volunteer Yuan Yaqin recalled how the Zulu volunteers use many items, including straw mats and blankets, to protect the roofs of their modest homes. Therefore, they put two wooden tables and plastic sheet over the car and turned it into an audio control room. With this spirit of improvisation, they would be able to hold the Buddha bathing ceremony.



Close to 11 a.m., the local volunteers changed into their Tzu Chi uniforms of long dark blue dresses and everyone took their places on the lawn, in preparation for the ceremony. The rain did not let up and there were not enough raincoats to go around – so everyone took a shower! But the rain did not dampen their spirits. All those present were determined to see the ceremony through to its completion. No-one paused and no-one complained. As they lined up in front of the table with the statues, the rain became even heavier, running down their hair, nose and face. But everyone silently took their place and walked forward in perfect order.



Three local volunteers -- Tolakele Mkhize, Beatrice Mokoena and Isabel Hlambisa – placed the light, the fragrant water and the flowers solemnly on the table. They were representing everyone present. To the sound of Tzu Chi music, the participants stepped forward to the table and walked around it, chanting prayers from Buddhist scripture. The rain only concentrated their minds and strengthened their determination.

At the end of the ceremony, everyone clasped their hands and prayed together. They expressed the three wishes of Master Cheng Yen and the mission of Tzu Chi people, lifting their voices to heaven.