

Joint Ground-Breaking Ceremony for Disaster Risk Reduction Project in Nine Schools

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation
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"In order to have a safe and peaceful school campus, it is important to consider risk prevention in advance. Tzu Chi Foundation's Project Hope of Disaster Risk Reduction aims to provide a safe, functional and green campus for students that is also full of local culture. It is to improve the learning environment in remote areas," said Master Cheng Yen, founder of Tzu Chi Foundation.

According to the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, the definition of this is to reduce the damage caused by natural disasters like earthquakes, floods, droughts and cyclones through an ethic of prevention. For people in Taiwan who live with a constant threat of such dangers as earthquakes and typhoons, disaster risk reduction is very important. Prevention is better than relief aid. Therefore Tzu Chi works closely with communities and the government to reduce such vulnerability. The Foundation has started Disaster Risk Reduction projects in 21 schools in Kaohsiung City, Pingtung County, Taitung County and Hualien County. In addition to building and rebuilding, Tzu Chi also provided assistance to repair over 300 lavatories in 59 schools in Hualien County. It is the goal of every Tzu Chi volunteer to provide a safe campus that will give students hope in the future.

On February 22, a joint ground-breaking ceremony for nine schools was held in Fuh-Shing Elementary School. It was attended by Mr. Huang Tzu-Teng, the Director-General of the K-12 Education Administration in the Ministry of Education, Mr. Huang Chien-Ting, governor of Taitung County Government, Ms. Lin Bi-Yu, vice-president of the Foundation, principals and students of nine schools and other guests. Each spadeful of earth represents blessings for students to have a good learning environment for the future.

In Taitung County, Tzu Chi took on the reconstruction projects in nine schools:



- **Tau-Yuan Junior High School**
- **Chihpen Junior High School**
- **Guanshan Junior High School**
- **Kang Le Elementary School**
- **Fuh-Shing Elementary School**
- **Luye Elementary School**
- **Ma Lan Elementary School**
- **Guang Ming Elementary School**
- **Jian Huo Elementary School**

On February 6, this year, a strong earthquake struck southern Taiwan; according to the Ministry

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of Education, a total of 481 schools were damaged to different degrees. It again brought to the surface the issue of school safety, especially in older schools; it also showed the necessity of implementing the Disaster Risk Reduction project.

Ms. Chang Fu-Mei, former principal of Tzu Chi Junior College of Nursing -- now Tzu Chi University of Science and Technology -- read a letter of blessing from Master Cheng Yen to the audience: "I am grateful for all the efforts of the government, schools and volunteers. Only with your help, Tzu Chi could have the opportunity to bring green building into campuses and provide a safe learning environment for students. Tzu Chi will do its best to complete the project. I wish you all the best."

Governor Huang Chien-Ting expressed his gratitude to Tzu Chi and his team; he also mentioned that one of the schools, Fuh-Shing Elementary School, was his alma mater. Mr. Huang Tzu-Teng of the Ministry of Education said that Taiwan did not have many natural resources but many natural hazards. Due to a shortage of government funding, it is a long wait for many schools; however, with the assistance of the Tzu Chi Foundation, the schools could bring a safe and peaceful environment to the students and avoid a long waiting time.

Earlier, on February 19, another joint ground-breaking ceremony was held at Ming Yih Elementary School for six schools in Hualien County: they were Ming Yih Elementary School, Chung Yuan Elementary School, Jia-Min Elementary School, Yuli Junior High School, Guo-Feng Junior High School and Huaren Junior High School.