

Foundation Starts Fourth Village for Typhoon Morakot Survivors

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation
Monday, 26 April 2010 00:00



On April 26, the foundation broke ground on a fourth village in southern Taiwan for the survivors of [Typhoon Morakot](#), which struck the island last August. The new village will provide homes for 167 families belonging to the Rukai, one of the aboriginal peoples of the island, who lost their mountain homes to the typhoon.

More than 1,500 people, including Taiwan Prime Minister Wu Duniy, took part in the ground-breaking ceremony, in Changzhi township, Pingtung county on the southern tip of Taiwan. The village will be built on a site of 30 hectares.

Hosting the event was Lin Biyu, vice president of the foundation: "Great love transcends boundaries, ethnicities and religions," she said. "Our [Master Cheng Yen](#) founded Tzu Chi 44 years ago, to serve people with a broad open mind and heart. We wish everyone to be safe and happy. This has been our vision and always will be." The future residents will be Rukai, from Wutai township, who lost their homes to the typhoon which hit Taiwan on August 8 last year. They performed a dance and songs in their native language to show their gratitude.

"I hope to have a peaceful, stable home soon," said one future resident. "I am satisfied and content," said another. "It is dangerous living up in the mountains. It is safer down here." "We thank Tzu Chi people for their unending support since the floods last August," said Yan Jincheng, magistrate of Wutai township. "We, the Rukai, understand gratitude and will repay the kindness." Premier Wu came to offer his blessings. "Changzhi is such a fine name," he said. "It symbolizes longevity and prosperity. I hope that, from the central government all the way down to the local township, our public servants will do their best to serve the residents here, so that their lives can take root."

Volunteers from Pingtung and Kaohsiung counties attended the ceremony. Dressed in their blue and white uniforms, some lined up on both sides of the road to welcome the guests, while others were busy preparing tea. "Some are here to work as guides," said volunteer Jiang Liqiu. "They are also responsible for serving tea, so you see them running back and forth in their uniforms." In addition, eight teams of volunteers from Pingtung – a total of 24 people -- were present to record the event, in words and video. They have taught themselves how to use the equipment. The oldest was Tang Shaopan, 83, who has been a volunteer since he was 75. "Now that I am retired, I have more time," he said. "If others cannot make it, I step up to the plate." He works as hard as the others.



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The volunteers spent a lot of time with the displaced families after the typhoon. They visited them in the temporary shelters where they were living; they meticulously noted details of their families and helped them apply for a house in the Great Love village. This involved long journeys over mountainous terrain, to visit the aboriginal communities that were affected. It took perseverance and sensitivity to do a thorough job and understand the background and needs of each family; they also worked to nurse them through the trauma of losing their homes and, in some cases, their loved ones, and to help them rebuild their lives. "They are sincere and simple people," said volunteer Zheng Guixiang. "They gave us Rukai names because they acknowledge what we have done. They even named some of us after the princesses of the tribe in recognition of our work."

This is the fourth Great Love village the foundation has built for those who lost their homes to the typhoon. The first is located in Shanlin, with 752 houses completed, and the other two Gaoshu and Yujin, with eight and 22 homes respectively.

The opening ceremony was a moment of joy and hope. Everyone sang and danced together as they looked forward to a bright new future.

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