

## Relief Aid in Cambodia (1994 ~ 1997)

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation

Wednesday, 14 December 2011 17:32

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Project time: November 1994-December 1997

Aid provided: Water pumps, seed and rice

In Cambodia, the civil war that had dragged on for more than twenty years subsided after UN-sponsored elections ended in May 1993. In the summer of 1994, just as the country was recovering from years of strife, consecutive floods and droughts affected thirteen out of the twenty-one provinces of the country, making more than two hundred thousand people homeless. It was the most severe natural disaster the country had suffered in three decades.

Cambodian officials wrote to the Tzu Chi Foundation requesting aid. The foundation dispatched a fact-finding team in November to investigate the situation. They discovered that if farmlands were not irrigated in time, there would be danger of large-scale famine. Funds were swiftly raised to purchase twenty large water pumps and ten thousand liters of diesel fuel to help farmers save rice crops. Rice and seed were also donated to over eighty thousand victims in two hard-hit provinces to alleviate the food shortage.

Tzu Chi's actions produced a chain effect of love among local overseas Chinese and businessmen from Taiwan. Aside from acting as translators during the relief operations, they also donated water pumps and excavators to help farmers.

From 1994 to 1997, consecutive years of flooding on Cambodia's major river, the Mekong, did serious damage to the country's agriculture and gave rise to severe food shortages. During these years, Tzu Chi sped aid to the disaster-stricken country eight times. Over a hundred volunteers traveled to more than ten provinces that had been attacked by floods and droughts. There, they distributed rice, seed, clothes, water pumps, generators and waterproof fabric, helping close to a million people.



The five thousand tons of seed that Tzu Chi donated at the end of 1996 turned into a bountiful harvest of two hundred thousand tons of rice the following year-the yield per unit had doubled. According to statistics compiled by the United Nation's Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and the World Food Organization (WFO), the rice yield in Cambodia had reached its highest point in twenty-six years. These numbers testify to the effect of Tzu Chi's timely aid.

In its four consecutive years of relief work in Cambodia, Tzu Chi not only provided living necessities and emergency relief to victims, but also directed its attention to local educational and medical needs: an ambulance furnished with medical equipment was donated to a hospital

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in the capital, Phnom Penh, and classrooms at a Chinese school were repaired.



The genuine concern shown by the members of Tzu Chi through years of assistance left a deep impression on the war-torn people. An official said: "Tzu Chi not only gave us material goods, but, what was even more valuable, presented examples from which we could learn to care for each other."

Source:

Enveloping The World with Great Love

The Tzu Chi International Relief Effort 1991-2000

(May 2000)