

Earthquake in Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation
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A strong earthquake shook an Indonesian town named Yogyakarta, causing thousands of deaths. Under the scorching sun and with primitive equipment and supplies, TIMA was competing against time to rescue lives.

Overcame Great Difficulties to Rescue Lives

On May 28th at 6:30 am, volunteers and medical professionals flew to the epicenter, from Jakarta on military airplanes, to work with local volunteers on emergency disaster relief.

On May 30th, the first rotation of TIMA volunteers from Taiwan, Singapore and Malaysia arrived at Yogyakarta for medical emergency relief.

Medical Response Unit Competing Against Time

Soon after the earthquake, Senopati Hospital was flooded with victims; many had no place to go but waited on the floor and outside the hospital. Tzu Chi surgeons operated on many of the victims given the dire situation and a shortage of blood plasma and medical supplies.

Working against the enemy of time, Tzu Chi doctors worked with the local medical professionals to operate on victims with severed and fractured limbs. Without proper treatment and surgeries, victims with fractured bones could become permanently disabled. This is the first time the TIMA medical team conducted surgeries and related procedures in a foreign disaster emergency relief.

Equipment and supplies in the hospital were inadequate. Tzu Chi medical team had to rely on hot boiling water to disinfect equipment and materials. Facing frequent electricity outages and a broken air conditioning system, Tzu Chi medical team accomplished many successful operations when challenged with great difficulties. The emergency room was so busy until 3 am in the morning.



Four Hundred Meters of Supply Lines

When the medical team arrived, an empty operating room with only the operating lighting was available. They equipped the room with temporary air-conditioning, an operation table, an anesthesia machine, appliances for general surgery, and the necessary supplies and medicine for orthopedics surgery. All the equipment and supplies were supplied by the TIMA office in Jakarta, which is 400 kilometers away.

TIMA members came from different parts of the world and worked diligently together. Nurses were clearly tired and they sat whenever possible but never complained about the fatigue. Everyone knew their roles and worked with what they had. They examined the X-ray films high

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above their heads using the sky light without the modern X-ray reading machines. They bought their own gear from the local hardware stores in light of insufficient machinery and equipment. When an old operating lamp was shaking during an operation, they held it steady with their own hands. When a leg ramp nwas no where to be found, they held it by hand the old fashioned way. It was difficult times. Disinfecting machinery and equipment using boiling hot water took up a full day and doctors often had to endure wearing special operating suits that were not fully dried.

Love Continues Its Course

A year had gone by and the new Tzu Chi School (Elementary to High school) was finally built to accommodate about two thousand students.

On July 28th 2007, at the opening of the new school, rice was distributed again to the quake victims. At the same time, a health fest was held to continue the medical care for the victims. About thirty-two hundred and eighty-seven people had been cared for since the earthquake. Tzu Chi volunteers extend care to the victims' children, and "Great Love" is continually expanding...