

First Lady of Paraguay Visits Tzu Chi

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation

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The First Lady of Paraguay, Mercedes Lugo de Maidana, visited the headquarters of Tzu Chi on September 7 to thank the foundation and Master Cheng Yen for its work in her country. With a branch there for 15 years, it has built seven primary schools, provided relief to flood victims and held winter distributions.

Ms Lugo is the sister of President Fernando Lugo, President of Paraguay; a former Roman Catholic priest. On the morning of September 7, accompanied by three others, she visited the Jing Si Hall in Hualien and learned about Tzu Chi's four missions -- Charity, Medicine, Education, and Culture. Later that day they visited Master Cheng Yen in the Jing Si Abode where she lives. Ms Lugo praised Tzu Chi for spreading love around the world regardless of religions and races: "Master Cheng Yen represents both compassion and wisdom," she said. She participated in a distribution activity held by Tzu Chi once in Paraguay. Master Cheng Yen said that, despite the barriers of religion and language between Taiwan and Paraguay, everyone shared the same language of love.

The foundation first went to Paraguay in 1992, when it helped people affected by flooding that was caused by torrential rain along a river that marks the border with Argentina. Volunteers from Argentina went to provide care and aid. Their charity work not only helped the flood survivors but also led many residents to become volunteers. Last year the first commissioner from that country came to Taiwan to receive her certificate from Master Cheng Yen. Eduardo V. Delgado Oviedo, the Defense Attaché of the embassy of Paraguay in Taipei, and his wife are both Tzu Chi volunteers and participate in training courses.

The Tzu Chi office in Paraguay was established 15 years ago. Volunteers regularly visit orphanages and senior centers. Over the years, the foundation has built seven primary schools, as part of Project Hope, for children in need so that they can receive a proper education. During the winter in the Southern Hemisphere, the volunteers have held distributions. In June, they went to Mariscal Lopez, a village inhabited by native people, three hours drive from Ciudad del Este, to deliver winter supplies for 76 families and stationery for 240 students. The village is the location of Tzu Chi's third Hope School.

At the end of Ms Lugo's visit, Master Cheng Yen gave her a copy of the Jing Si Aphorisms and a scarf and blanket made by Da Ai (Great Love) Technology from recycled PPT bottles.