

Volunteers Making Cloth Masks for People in Need

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation
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Due to COVID-19, there has been a severe shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) in hospitals across the world. Whilst people now understand the importance of face coverings to prevent spread of the virus, with some countries such as the USA, promoting the use of masks, the use of critical supplies, such as surgical masks or N95 respirators, are reserved for front-line responders and health professionals. Community members are encouraged, instead, to use cloth masks and face coverings. BTCF, in over 12 countries, have been working to produce cloth masks and mask coverings for vulnerable communities, front-line responders and volunteers.

To make cloth masks, BTCF utilised its network of volunteers, with experienced volunteers running training sessions both face-to-face, and, with regions having restricted movements, online sessions. Volunteers also used online platforms to share designs and methods, improving and tailoring designs for local materials and use.



Dharma Master Cheng Yen, the founder of BTCF, appeals to all “In this time of turbulence, it is important for us to take care of our communities, and through spreading love, creating a covering to shield from the storm.” Encouraged by Dharma Master Cheng Yen’s call to action, volunteers aged 6 to 88 have all taken part in making cloth masks for their own communities. From February 15 to April 17, a total of over 197,800 cloth masks were made and distributed.

In Malaysia, BTCF, in partnership with tailoring shops and clothing factories that have been temporarily closed due to COVID-19, were able to use their machinery to increase production of mask coverings. These mask coverings allow surgical masks to be reused through the washing of the outer covering.



Other regions, such as Turkey, worked with clothing factories to produce 20,000 low cost cloth masks. These were used for volunteers, community members and families and students at Menahel International School, a school set up for Syrian refugees by the government of Sultangazi, Syrian teachers, and BTCF in 2015. The distribution of cloth masks were done in relations to the needs and safety of the regions, posting cloth masks or depending on the needs of vulnerable communities, BTCF would deliver cloth masks along to other household necessities.

Understanding different regions will have different needs and materials available, BTCF

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chapters were able to make these cloth masks from different fabrics, materials in various sizes and designs.

COVID-19 Relief Action Report #1: [Activities as of 23rd April, 2020](#) (PDF)