

New School for Typhoon Survivors in South Taiwan

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation
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On January 16, the Tzu Chi Foundation opened an elementary school in south Taiwan for victims of Typhoon Morakot in August 2009. It has 18 classrooms and a sporting area and will enable the local children to attend school within walking distance.

The typhoon to hit Taiwan in recorded history, Morakot buried three elementary schools in the area of Kaohsiung, the island's second city, with mudslides.

The foundation undertook to rebuild one of them, the Minzu Elementary School. It re-opened on January at a new location, in Shanlin Da Ai Village, which Tzu Chi built for the victims of the typhoon. The inauguration ceremony was attended by Mr. Lin Join-sane, Chief Executive of the Morakot Post-Disaster Reconstruction Council, Mr. Tsai Ching-Hwa, Director-general of Kaohsiung Education Bureau and Ms. Lin Pi-yu, vice-president of the foundation, as well as teachers, students, residents of the village and Tzu Chi volunteers.

The school is one of several construction projects the foundation has undertaken to help the victims of landslides and flooding caused by typhoons and other natural disasters. They include permanent housing communities, to enable residents who lived in unsafe mountainous areas to relocate to lower ground. Namasia was one of the villages devastated; its Minzu Elementary School was buried. The village relocated to another part of the Namasia district to began a new, safer life. For their schooling, students from the village had to commute by shuttle bus for a year to the Cishan Primary School. With the opening of the new school, they will able to go there by foot or bicycle, just as they could in their original home in the mountain area.



The inauguration ceremony began with a sign language performance by members of Tzu Chi Teachers Association and students of the after-school program in Shanlin Da Ai village. Du Jun-yuan, chairman of Da Ai TV Station, read a letter of blessing from Dharma Master Cheng Yen: she said she was very grateful that the government and civil organizations had cooperated in the spirit of love, regardless of race and religion. She also expressed her thanks to those who had worked day and night to complete the construction. Ms. Lin Pi-yu, vice-president of the foundation, said that the school design combined the natural landscape of the village and the culture of the community. The buildings are environmentally friendly, with steel structure and a water-recycling system. The school has 12 general and six functional classrooms, a kindergarten, a basketball court and parking lot. The foundation also donated many children's books, picture books and DVD sets, to enable students to cultivate a good reading habit.

The school is a great convenience for the residents of the village. The children can go there a short distance from their homes; their parents can pay close attention when they walk to school

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and feel at ease about their safety. After school, they can go back to school to play ball, run or exercise. “The future of a country is its human resources, which come from a good education,” said Lin. “The opening of the Minzu Da Ai Elementary School means a bright future for the Shanlin Da Ai Village.”