

Tzu Chi to Build Great Love Village in Haiti

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation
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The Tzu Chi emergency relief team in Haiti is looking for the possibility of building Great Love Village, to provide permanent homes for families who lost theirs in the terrible earthquake of January 12. The team has completed its fourth major distribution of aid to survivors and doctors of [Tzu Chi International Medication Association](#) (TIMA) are treating wounded patients in a temporary medical station in Port-au-Prince.

The United Nations estimates that more than one million Haitians have lost their homes. As a long-term contribution to them, the foundation wants to build a Great Love Village, as it has done in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, [Taiwan](#) and other countries for the survivors of natural disasters. The village would provide not only sturdy and permanent homes that could withstand earthquakes but also public facilities, like churches, schools, medical clinics and meeting halls; it would be a community more than simply a collection of individual homes. Together with the Department of Social Housing of the Ministry of Social Affairs, volunteers are looking at two possible sites close to the city of Ganthier, east of the capital. One, owned by the government, has 26 hectares; it planned to build a housing project there but ran out of money. “The government has very little land in Port-au-Prince,” said Elonge Othelot, an official of the department. “This is the best and biggest area and has the highest value. It is the only area we can offer.” The city is on the main road from the capital to the neighboring Dominican Republic. “Because it is close to the road, access should be easy,” said volunteer Huang Hankui. “For power, you can see the lines here, so it may be okay. Water will have to be pumped from underground.” The volunteers are also looking at another site, five minutes further east, next to Haiti’s biggest lake. This has an area of 30 hectares. As the sun fell over the lake, the volunteers could, for a few moments, forget the tragedy around them and feel hope for the rebirth of Haiti.



Giving rice and kidney beans

On February 11, the relief team carried out its fourth major distribution, of 1,700 packages, including rice and kidney beans. The venue was a site of two acres at the Impact for God Church in the Tabarre district of Port-au-Prince. Given the unstable conditions, the team had to prepare the distribution carefully. They invited Jordanian troops from the U.N. Peacekeeping Force in Haiti to keep order and issued coupons to the residents chosen to receive the goods, with help from the church. As the convoy with the goods approached the site, they saw the residents stand in front of the tents where they live holding up signs saying 'We are victims, Please help us'. Impatient, they feared that they would not be able to collect food. Then there was a sudden downpour, which, fortunately, stopped as quickly as it started.

The volunteers sang the Haitian national anthem and a Tzu Chi song. Ge Jishe, executive director of the foundation in the U.S., told the crowd: “The most important thing we want to tell you is that we care. And we wish that you also care for each other and help each other.” Then

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the distribution began, with residents waiting in line, the aid coupons in their hand. A total of 60 local volunteers helped to load and unload the supplies, which were handed to the residents. Helping with the distribution were doctors in white coats who belong to TIMA. The volunteers kept those waiting entertained with songs. At the side, one gave an interview to a television crew from the Dominican Republic. The mayor of Tabarre, Jean Frantz Theodat, was impressed with what he sees. "Even outside, I saw people very calm. They all have their food coupons and are ready to take their supplies. I feel that this is a very orderly distribution and am proud it is being done in this way." Volunteers found that one pregnant woman was too weak to take her supplies home by herself; they helped to flag down a car to take her home. In addition to giving aid, Tzu Chi wants to encourage a spirit of mutual help and great love.

Treating the wounded

In another part of Port-au-Prince, doctors from the TIMA were helping to treat some of the hundreds of wounded who have received no treatment since the earthquake five weeks ago. They are working at a temporary medical station set up by Medicine du Monde (Doctors of the World), a French NGO, along medical professionals from many countries. The tents are filled with injured Haitians and more arrive every day. One was a father who brought his wounded daughter. Another was a woman having her wound cleaned without any anesthetic, of which there is a severe shortage; a sharp cry pierced the air as she buckled under the pain.

The TIMA doctors were encouraged by the arrival of a Haitian doctor named Cesar. "I am here to help my people and help you to do the best you can." TIMA doctor Chen Fumin said that Cesar was a family doctor. "He saw our sign and came straight in and asked if he could help us. He shares the same heart as all of us Tzu Chi volunteers." Cesar promised to come back another day. Doctors from Haiti and abroad share a common goal, to deliver the earthquake survivors from pain and suffering.

TIMA was established in 1998 to provide free clinics around the world. It has grown to more than 15,000 physicians and volunteers and has provided medical services to 1.5 million patients worldwide.