

Tzu Chi Volunteers Help Children Who Survived Typhoon Morakot

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation
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Last August [Typhoon Morakot](#) damaged the lives of thousands of people, including children who lost their homes and schools and found their education severely disrupted. Tzu Chi volunteers have been working hard to help these children, giving them love and teaching to make up for what they have lost.

Two primary schools in Taoyuan township, Kaohsiung county, Minsheng and Zhangshan, were badly damaged by the typhoon and their children moved temporarily to safer schools. Many have found it hard to adapt to a new curriculum and new classmates. They came from rural areas, where the level of education is lower than in the cities; many of their parents work away from home, so that they do not benefit from help at home with their school work. The volunteers have worked to fill the need for more teaching and spiritual support in the absence of the parents.

"We try to reach them by studying a bit of their language or learning songs of blessing – maybe praying with them," said volunteer Zhu Yanlun. The children are Aborigines – the original inhabitants of Taiwan – and speak their own languages; they learn Mandarin, the official language of Taiwan, at school. Zhu said that true giving did not consider a return. "Anyway, there will always be a return, because they see what we do and it touches them."

Xie Guozhi, principal of Zhangshan school, said that Tzu Chi's constant guidance had inspired a major change in the behaviour of the children: "we are not just casual acquaintances with Tzu Chi. We have formed deep friendships." Chen Liyu, principal of Minsheng school, said that, although the children were away from home, their grades had improved. This is the result, in part, of working after school, something they did not do before the typhoon. Every Wednesday afternoon, the volunteers organize talent classes for the students. "The children love it," said Pan Qizong, a teacher at Zhangshan. "They get excited about staying on because the volunteers are coming. They shout 'the Tzu Chi teachers are coming!' That is how happy they are. The Tzu Chi teachers say that we must have a thankful heart. Although the children may not know what to do or how to express this, they are slowly influenced by this."

One of the students at Zhangshan who is receiving special attention is Xie Zuen, a third grader who suffers from a mild learning disability. Since his father passed away and his mother left home when he was small, he lives with his aunt. The damage caused by the typhoon, in addition to the loss of his parents, has made him more insecure and the more in need of love and care. He needs additional classes to keep up with the other students, so the Tzu Chi volunteers are giving him one-on-one tuition. "Zu-en is a fast learner but forgets quickly," said teacher Ke Yining. "He might be able to learn on the spot but will forget within an hour or so. His aunt provides medical treatment for him and we teacher try to help as well." Tzu Chi volunteer Sha Male said that Zu-en was a fine child. "After spending just half a day with him, I feel such warmth. I wish that more of our brothers and sisters would keep him company." He is no longer alone; each volunteer is like a parent to him. The care and love given by the volunteers is bringing a ray of hope into the life of this special child.

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After a whole semester together, children, teachers and parents have come to love the volunteers. Eventually, the disaster will be a distant memory and the pain erased – leaving only the memory of love.