

Tzu Chi Opens 47 Permanent Homes in Taitung, Taiwan

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation
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On July 31, the Tzu Chi Foundation held a ceremony to mark the opening of 47 permanent houses for those who living in potential danger area in Taitung, southeast Taiwan during a typhoon in 2016. The residents are now finally able to start a new life and have a safe and peaceful community.

Typhoon Meranti struck eastern Taiwan in September 2016 and severely damaged Aiguopu hamlet in Dawu Township, Taitung County. The heavy rainfall reached 327 millimeters; it caused a mud flood that destroyed the houses. As a result, the government of Taitung County identified Aiguopu hamlet as a place vulnerable to the flow of debris. After the disaster, Justin Huang, head of Taitung County, visited the Tzu Chi Foundation; together they planned how to build the homes and resettle the residents. Tzu Chi helped by building the permanent houses; they are semi-detached steel buildings, made of environmentally friendly materials. It took a year and 10 months to construct the 47 homes. Now the residents can settle down and start a new life. The ceremony to open the new permanent houses was held on July 31. About 150 people took part, including almost 100 from the local government, the Council of Indigenous Peoples and the residents, as well as about 50 Tzu Chi volunteers.



The new houses are classified as three types according to the number living in them. A household of over six people has 112 square meters; one of three to six people has 93 square meters; and one of one or two persons has 46 square meters. The houses are all equipped with solar water heaters.

Justin Huang, the head of Taitung County, expressed thanks on behalf of the Aiguopu residents. He said that the hamlet's original site was dangerous because it was near a mountain and a mud flood could happen easily. It was not identified as vulnerable to debris flow until two years ago due to Typhoon Meranti. He thanked Tzu Chi for their help and for coordinating with government departments, enabling Aiguopu hamlet to be relocated to a safe place. The government will continue to help in different ways; it is giving each household NT\$18,000 as a gift for moving in.



Zhang Han-lun, a Tzu Chi commissioner from Taitung, read a letter from Master Cheng Yen; in it, she expressed her hope that the residents can be safe and joyful there and escape from their nightmare.

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Scott Liu, the deputy CEO of the Tzu Chi Mission of Charity, said that the disaster could not be completely predicted: “what we can do is to lessen the damage and prepare for the disaster, especially a horrible mud flood. The main goal which the Tzu Chi Foundation and the government discussed and agreed was to make a safe base for the residents,” he said.

One of the residents, Lin Zheng-yi, said that his new permanent house of 112 square meters was not as big as his home on the mountain, but he sincerely thanked Tzu Chi for its great love. When he heard the lyrics of “One Family,” he felt touched that Tzu Chi considered them as their family and gave them such wonderful houses.



Zhou Yu-ying, a 65-year-old resident, said that she had not seen a mud flood before Typhoon Morakot in 2009. As a result, she had to evacuate her home and has had to stay in the activity center of Dawu Elementary School for three or four days every time a typhoon comes. She was tired of moving so many times a year; but she had to stay in the shelter and eat instant noodles in case of a mud flood. Now she was about to move into the new and safe permanent house. She felt so relieved at not having to think any more of mudslides.

The Tzu Chi Foundation expects people to respect the environment, cherish the land and manage their community in a sustainable way, in order to bequeath to our descendants a safe and joyful environment.