

## Helping the Orphans

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation  
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The earthquake struck everyone, young and old, rich and poor. Among the dead were 16 of the 28 orphans who lived in the Children of Simon's Help Center for Destitute Children. They were crushed to death inside the building. Since then, the other children have been too afraid to sleep inside; instead, they sleep on mattresses in a courtyard outside. After the quake, 22 other children arrived, taking the total to 40. With the destruction of so many buildings, rents have soared; for this center, the cost is US\$1,000 a month.



This money has been provided by a woman from Jordan. But, after the quake, she contracted malaria and had to go to the United States for treatment. She asked the Jordanian soldiers of the U.N. Peacekeeping Force for help. They naturally turned to the volunteers of Tzu Chi volunteers who have worked closely with them since their arrival. The soldiers have provided protection for their aid distribution. "The benefactor of the orphanage is a Jordanian woman who has gone to the U.S. for treatment for malaria and cannot come back for the moment," said volunteer Chen Dexiong. "She went through the Jordanian peacekeepers to contact Tzu Chi."

The volunteers were happy to help and went to visit the orphanage. They found the children short of almost everything, apart from the care they receive from the staff. Living so close together, many have infectious diseases. One girl with a shaven head had a skin complaint and a two-year-old boy had a large patch of ringworm on his right elbow, which had evidently been there a long time. The youngest is two years old and the oldest, Elmeau Masedana, is like a big sister taking care of the younger ones. "Every day I plait their hair. There are four of us who help to do it."

Before the volunteers left, the children sang a song for them. Despite all their difficulties, the children were still smiling. The warmth and compassion of those around them is helping them to emerge from the aftermath of the earthquake.