

## Red Riding Hood Versus The Bugs

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation  
Wednesday, 10 June 2015 20:47

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Schools in the quake affected Bhaktapur district are finally ready to open. But volunteer Lin Shu-chen, a teacher and also a member of the Tzu Chi Teachers Association, realize that smiles have been stolen from the faces of children in the Maheswori tent community. She soon realized that there is a problem they have to deal with first before school reopens – head lice.

### Head lice prevalent under poor environmental condition

On the 27th of May, Lin Shu-chen voiced this concern to the relief team. Consensus was quickly met to assess the number of children requiring treatment so medication can be prepared. Two days later on the 29th, Lin Shu-chen rallied the help of local young volunteers to count the number of people in the tent community and to spread the message that Tzu Chi will be treating head lice tomorrow. Once the word is out, more children gathered and she found out that as many as 95% of the children have head lice. There might be a problem with the living conditions in the tent community.



Walking into the tent of two little girls, she was shocked to see the interior dirty and messy. “The hygiene is very poor and the two sisters are sleeping with these bugs and flies on the ground. There is not enough water to wash their hair properly either.”

Seeing the poor environment these children are in, Lin Shu-chen is deeply saddened. There is a dire need to help these children alleviate the suffering.

### The plastic bag cap

It turns out, children are not the only ones plagued with the disease. On the next day (5/30), hundred and ten residents ranging from as young as one year old to seventy over elderly gathered in this battle against head lice.

Unfamiliar with the disease at first, Tzu Chi volunteers consulted Dr. Huang Ming-I to get a good understanding. Next is the highlight.



Tzu Chi volunteers and local young volunteers geared up themselves with masks and gloves and begin with the operation. One by one the residents sat down to have their hairs rubbed with

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special medicated shampoo. After which the hairs should be wrapped for four minutes or so for the medication to do its work, but where are they going to find so many bathroom caps for hundred over heads? In difficulty comes great wisdom. Volunteers gathered red plastic bags to be used as caps. Soon, the tent community is bustling with "red riding hoods".

13-year-old Swastika together with her mother and younger sister looked satisfied and happy after the treatment. 14-year-old Priya also came today, which happens to be her Birthday as well. After getting her hair washed, she came back with candies to share with everyone. Under a chorus of Happy Birthday song, Priya made her wish, "May peace be upon the world!"

The crisis is not over yet. According to Lin Shu-chen, the head lice problem cannot be eradicated with one treatment. The relief team plans to be back next week for a second round.

(Report by Li Mei-ju, Li Lao-man and Ku Chi-hung in Nepal. 30th May, 2015)