

Tzu Chi Delivers First Aid for Victims of Sichuan Earthquake

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Volunteers from the Tzu Chi Foundation delivered their first aid to victims of the Sichuan earthquake, taking bread and blankets to more than 100 students who were staying the night at a school because they could not go home. They have also begun distribution of more than 10,000 blankets and sets of daily necessities to those affected.

The earthquake struck just after 8.00 a.m. Beijing time on April 20 with a magnitude of 7.0 on the Richter scale. Its epicenter was Yaan, 72 miles southwest of the provincial capital, Chengdu. According to the latest estimates, it left 179 people dead and nearly 7,000 injured and affected 1.6 million.

Immediately after the earthquake, the volunteers set up an emergency relief center in Yaan, to collect goods and arrange the distribution; they organized the first aid mission the very day of the quake. Their destination was Mingshan Senior High School. At the moment when the quake struck, the school was holding an athletics meeting; after the quake, the students left the site to stay with family, relatives and friends. But more than 100 were unable to go home because the roads had been blocked; so they decided to spend the night at the school.



At 7.30 p.m. on the 20th, the volunteers set out from Yaan, taking with them the blankets and bread. After a two-hour journey, they arrived at the school. They found the students preparing to spend the night in the library and in tents in the exercise yard. They distributed the bread and the blankets and brought comfort to the young people traumatized by their experience. "We could feel the whole building shake,"

The next day, April 21, another group of volunteers entered the affected area to begin distribution of the 10,000 blankets and 10,000 sets of daily necessities which they had prepared. The blankets were used at the start of this year in distributions during the cold winter months. The daily necessities include toothbrushes, toothpaste and face towels. The volunteers will also provide counseling and psychological support.