

## 58 Families From Laiyi Tribe Move Into New Homes Built by Tzu Chi

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation  
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On January 15, 58 families from the Laiyi tribe who lost their houses to typhoons moved into new homes built for them by the Tzu Chi Foundation on the southern tip of Taiwan. The homes are able to resist high winds and earthquakes and will give them a secure future.

More than 400 members of the tribe attended the handover ceremony for the new homes at three o'clock in the afternoon in Sinpi township, Pingtung county. They were joined by Mr. Tsao Chi-hung, Magistrate of Pingtung County, Mr. Lin Join-sane, Chief Executive of the Morakot Post-Disaster Reconstruction Council, Executive Yuan, and Ms. Lin Pi-yu, Vice President of the Tzu Chi Foundation. The ceremony opened with elders of the Paiwan aboriginal tribe singing a traditional melody to express their gratitude for the love of Tzu Chi volunteers around the world. Volunteers then sang the song "Happy Face", using sign language. This was followed by Dharma Master Fa Ming reading a letter of blessing from Dharma Master Cheng Yen: she said that the shoulders of Tzu Chi volunteers are the best support for the disaster survivors. "I am very grateful to volunteers around the world for showing their love and raising money for the needy people in Taiwan," she said.

Liao Chih-Chiang, the head of Laiyi Township, gave a speech: "I am very grateful for the great love around the world. It has helped the villagers to have a safe and sturdy home. The Laiyi is a strong tribe and the people will grow stronger in their new homes." This was followed by a speech from

Mr. Tsao, the Magistrate of Pingtung County: "It is good to have a home; a new home is even better. We thank Tzu Chi for their great love, in helping everyone, regardless of their race. I look forward to the third phase construction of permanent houses." Mr. Lin Join-sane, CEO of the Morakot Post-Disaster Reconstruction Council, recalled the difficulties of the reconstruction process and how the the government and civil organizations worked together to build the homes. The ceremony ended with songs of prayer, love and care.



Mr. Lin and other guests visited the new home of Hung Chia-ming, head of Laiyi village: Hung said that he was very thankful for the love and care of Tzu Chi volunteers. Chiu Rui-feng, who lost his wife during Typhoon Morakot in August 2009 and was in the depths of despair, is one of the new residents of the new village: "it is very fortunate to have Tzu Chi's selfless love. It brought me hope. It was as if someone reached out and pulled you up. Do not need to worry. There is a place to live, to stabilize oneself. It calms the hearts."

This was the second phase of construction of permanent housing, in which 58 units were built. During the ceremony, the houses were handed over to the residents -- it was the best Chinese New Year gift for them. They were built for members of the Laiyi tribe whose mountain homes

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were damaged by Typhoon Morakot in August 2009 and Typhoon Fanapi in September 2010. After Morakot, government inspectors visited the area and decided that it was too dangerous. They encouraged the residents to relocate; but some did not want to leave their traditional area and chose to stay. But, in September, 2010, Typhoon Fanapi devastated the village again and it suffered heavy losses. The residents realized the power of nature and decided to move from the mountain area to a safe living environment. So they applied for permanent housing. Through the introduction of the government, the head of Laiyi Village and resident representatives visited the Tzu Chi Foundation in Hualien County. The foundation agreed to build the second phase of permanent houses. The construction began on June 18, 2011 and was finished before Chinese New Year.



There are 58 houses in the new village. The foundation designed them with two main elements in mind -- a safe structure and ability to resist wind and earthquakes. The houses were built in three different sizes -- 36, 32 and 14 ping (approximately 1,300, 1,100, and 500 square feet). The spaces are designed for families of six to ten, three to five and one to two people. The large and middle-size houses have two stories, including four bedrooms, one dining room, one living room, two bathrooms and one kitchen. One of the bedrooms is located on the first floor for elderly members of the family. The small-size house has two bedrooms, one living room, one dining room, one bathroom and a kitchen. Additionally, Tzu Chi prepared gifts like a television and cooking utensils for the convenience of the new owners.

Ms. Lin Pi-yu, Vice-President of the Foundation, said: "this is the love of Tzu Chi volunteers in 52 countries. We pray for the residents of the New Laiyi Tribe. We wish them an auspicious future filled with love." She visited each household and gave it her blessing.