

Volunteers Bring Love to Freezing Villagers

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In the depths of winter, nearly 200 Tzu Chi volunteers delivered food, clothing and medical care to thousands of poor villagers in Hebei, north China. It was part of the aid distribution which the foundation organises each winter across China.

The location was Yanmeidong township, which lies at 1,300 metres above sea level in Laiyuan county. With two cold fronts following each other, temperatures there fell to minus ten below zero. Braving the freezing winds, 173 volunteers came from Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai and Taiwan to take part in the two-day distribution of food and clothing; 2,507 households with 4,884 people received the items. When they made the donations, the volunteers bowed in respects, as is their custom; they saw that the hands of the recipients were covered in chilblains.



In addition, the volunteers held a free clinic for people who have little access to primary health care. The greatest need was treatment for eyes. “The people are poor, so they have no way to get out,” said Shen Wen-hui, the superintendent of a hospital called New Vision Ophthalmology. “This has a big impact on their eyesight. The free clinic is to help them recover their sight. We fund the treatment for the residents. It is our obligation.” Shen saw the love and care provided by other Tzu Chi programs and was moved to offer his services. Among the volunteers in Laiyuan was Sun Miao, who has received care from the foundation for a long time. As a result, the cataracts in his right eye were healed. So he put on the vest of the volunteer to help.

The residents of remote Laiyuan county cannot escape the poverty trap and the cold of winter – but the love of Tzu Chi climbs the hills to bring them warmth and comfort.