

Bam, Iran Earthquake

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation
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Without any warning, a 600 year-old ancient city, Bam, disappeared before dawn; numerous lives perished under the rubbles. TIMA brought medicine and love to the victims, Tzu Chi volunteers rebuilt the schools, the ancient city is rising again two years later.

On December 26th 2003, at 5:28 a.m., a devastating earthquake struck the city of Bam, in the country of Iran. This ancient city, constructed more than six centuries ago, was instantly reduced to ruins. Countless people were buried under the rubble. Lives were taken away in an instant.

Working with Flexibility

Tzu Chi's first disaster relief team, comprised of eleven people, including doctors, nurses, and volunteers from Taiwan, Jordan, and Turkey, arrived in the affected area within seventy-two hours, the most crucial time for any rescue operation.

From December 28th 2003, through January of 2004, Tzu Chi operated a disaster relief program including emergency care, free clinics, materials and supplies, needs assessment, and victims' support with care, and love near the city of Baravat, located southeast of Bam.

The city of Bam was in total chaos after the earthquake. The disaster relief team worked the disaster area from a bus filled with medical and other emergency aid. Wherever the bus stopped, the Tzu Chi team distributed aid, and provided free clinical service. The Tzu Chi team searched for those in need of assistance, following survivors living in tents and temporary quarters set up after the earthquake.



For over ten days, the bus served as an emergency, mobile clinic. A total of two hundred patients received medical treatment. Most of the cases were non life-threatening, and the most troubling problems seemed to be psychological - the shock of the quakes and the loss of loved ones. Therefore, the doctors listened patiently to the victims and expressed sincere interest in their plight. Comfort and support with love sometimes works as well as medical care and advice.

One Hundred First-Aid Kits, One Hundred Missions

Photo: While treating patients at the villages, the team gave away a hundred first-aid kits to victims and trained them how to use the kits. The training sessions empowered the victims to not only help themselves with the kits, but others like them.

On March 4th 2007, the completion of the Tzu Chi "Hope Project" in Bam, Iran was celebrated. This construction project took more than three years, and resulted in the construction of five new schools, all of which were financed and built by Tzu Chi. Four are girls' schools: Fatamieh,

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Najmieh, Motahari and Parvin. The fifth, Adab, is a boys' school. These schools can accommodate approximately one thousand-four hundred students. This is Tzu Chi's first project on such a grand scale in the Middle-East. Tzu Chi becomes the second nonprofit organization, besides the Red Cross, to build schools in developing countries around the world.