

Five UNHCR Tzu Chi Education Centres' Joint Sports Day

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation
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After the education centres were set up at the beginning of this year, the children of the Myanmar refugees can receive academic knowledge as well as humanistic values like the other children. They are also given the opportunity to learn the spirit of sport through the Sports Day.

A fun filled Sports Day

On that day, 315 students and their parents came in 10 buses. Each bus was accompanied by four Tzu Chi volunteers and a teacher; while 180 volunteers were at the venue getting ready for the grand event.

Many funny incidents took place during the Sports Day organized by Tzu Chi on October 19, 2008. The event was held in the sports field of the Chinese Taipei School in Kuala Lumpur.

As this was the first Sports Day for many of the refugees' children, they could not hide their excitement and curiosity. Some of them even sneaked into the field to play when the teachers and the adults were not looking.

The Tzu Chi's educational volunteer team comprising of representatives from the parent-child class, teenagers' class, collegiates, teachers' association, Great Love mothers and others was the first to enter the field with a song "Children of the Earth"; followed by six other teams of young participants wearing orange, blue, green, navy blue, yellow and red shirts, and white caps.

Echo Chien, CEO of Tzu Chi Kuala Lumpur, said during her opening speech that these children had been through a tough time and were finally able to receive proper education. It was just like sunshine after a storm. She hoped that the children would learn team spirit as well as the spirit of gratitude, respect and love in facing the challenges in the future.

"We will participate in the Sports Day with honesty and sincerity. We will not give up easily despite facing challenges." This was the vow taken by the athletes.

The Tzu Chi's Educational volunteer team led the crowd for a light workout to the songs, "Children of the Earth" and "Aerobic Workout". The parents were too shy to join in initially but they enjoyed as much as the children when they finally participated.



Ready, get set, go

The first event was the 4x100 meter relay run, followed by parent-child programmes such as the 'three legged race' and 'heart to heart' where the parents and children played in teams. As the parents and children were new to the games, there were hilarious moments.

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Pheet! The 4x100 meter relay race had started! When the third runner from the Red Team was ready to receive the baton, the second runner had no baton to pass to him. The second runner had forgotten to take the baton from the first runner! As a result, he had to run all the way back to get it. Needless to say, the Red Team lagged far behind.

There was a father-and-son team in the three legged race who walked very slowly instead of running. The father, 44 year-old Mohd Suvei, had had a fall earlier and injured his leg. Although he had not recovered fully, he and his 9 year-old son were determined to participate. They persevered and completed the race. A mother who had been injured in a car accident also did not want to miss out on the event and came with her child.

The children showed strength of will. Cheered on by their teammates, they raced with full force towards the finishing line. They also learned to show their concern and understanding for their friends and their families in the process.

42 year-old Abdul Rahim, with crutches and standing on one leg, watched his two daughters from the side of the field. He said that although his daughters were not the fastest in the race, he was proud of them because they completed the race.

Finally, the teacher-and-parent team played the 'tug of war' against the Tzu Chi volunteer team. The parents and teachers showed great teamwork and sportsmanship, and won the game. The children ran to the field to hug them.



A sports day for parents, teachers and students

After the sign language performance of "One family", Mohammad Younis Qureshi, the UNHCR representative, and Echo Chien presented prizes to the first to fifth place winners. The prize presentation marked the end of the event.

In his closing speech, Mohammad Younis Qureshi thanked the Tzu Chi volunteers for successfully organizing the sports day for the parents, teachers and students.

Mohammad Younis Qureshi encouraged the students not to treat their refugee status as a stumbling block, but to move forward and realize their dreams. He hoped that UNHCR and Tzu Chi would remain long-term cooperating partners.

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