

Groundbreaking for School and Great Love Village

Written by Chen Jing Wei

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Tzu Chi will rebuild five schools and a Great Love Village with over 700 houses for the cyclone victims. The groundbreaking ceremonies for the first school and the houses were held on November 2 and 3 respectively.

Half a year has passed since the onslaught of Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar. Tzu Chi volunteers are still there to provide continuing help. Besides providing free clinic services, sundries and stationary for the children, Tzu Chi has provided rice seeds and fertilizers to the farmers after the disaster. The time for harvesting has come and the villagers have the opportunity to adhere to their tradition of keeping a portion of rice daily for charity.

It is a tradition to keep rice for charity

On November 1, 2008, 70 Tzu Chi volunteers from Malaysia, Vietnam, Thailand and Taiwan arrived in Myanmar for the groundbreaking ceremonies of the Great Love Village and No.4 Elementary and Middle School of Thingangyun respectively. Then on November 4, the volunteers went to U-yin Village in Kyautan Township to join in the happy celebration of a plentiful harvest with the villagers.

While everyone was expecting the arrival of the dry season at the end of October, it suddenly rained for four consecutive days, making everyone rather anxious as the rain would destroy the rice. Thankfully the sky was very clear on the day of the harvesting celebration. Many villagers donated the money they got through selling the rice they had kept aside daily. The donations were given to Tzu Chi for the needy. The head of the village again thanked Tzu Chi for the rice seeds and fertilizers.

It was a tradition for the Burmese to keep rice for charity, however, because life was very tough for them, many had stopped practicing this tradition. With the help of Tzu Chi, farmers have the opportunity to practise this tradition again.

U Myint Soe and his family of seven depend on their 7-acre rice field for their livelihood. Their house was partially destroyed by the cyclone. When they were worried about the money needed for rice seeds and fertilizers, Tzu Chi volunteers brought hope to them.

U Myint Soe said, "I am poor and can't donate a lot of money at one time, but I can put aside a handful of rice daily when cooking rice. I will sell the rice for cash and put the money into the bamboo bank when you come. I want to help others just like Tzu Chi is helping us."



Groundbreaking ceremony for the first school

Cyclone Nargis has damaged 1,800 of the 2,600 schools in Yangon area. It is important to provide a good environment for the students as they are our future. Tzu Chi volunteers will help

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to rebuild five schools, one of which is the No. 4 Elementary and Middle School of Thingangyun.

The school was upgraded by the Government of Myanmar on October 31, 2008, because the design provided by Tzu Chi matches a middle school specification.

The groundbreaking ceremony on November 2 was joined by the Lieutenant-General of the Ministry of Defense, Governor of Yangon District, Mayor of Yangon City, the Minister of Social Welfare Department and entrepreneurs. This elementary and middle school will have 24 classrooms. It is expected to be opened next year, empowering children and helping them to achieve their dreams.

Groundbreaking for Great Love Village

Cyclone Nargis destroyed many houses of the villagers half a year ago. Ever since then, these Burmese people have longed for nothing but a shelter that can withstand storms. There are 744 Great Love houses to be built and the groundbreaking ceremony was held on November 3. Government officials, including the Director of Burmese Ministry of Energy and the Vice-Director of the Ministry of Social Welfare both took time off their busy schedules to deliver their earnest blessings. The houses are expected to be ready after nine months. After the ceremony, volunteers also carried out home visits and an aid distribution to the villagers.

In the face of current economic crisis, Master Cheng Yen urged everyone to emulate the hardworking spirit and simple lifestyle adopted by these victims.

Translated by Chen Jing Wei

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