

Special  
Report



# Cherishing Mexico with **Medical Aid**

Documentary of Tzu Chi's Earthquake  
Relief and Clinics in Mexico, 2017

Written by Tzu Chi's Mexico Earthquake Relief Medical Team





**Cities near the epicenter of the September 19, 2017 earthquake suffered the collapse of numerous old buildings and the loss of lives. Citizens of Puebla, Mexico create posters asking for help.**

On September 19, 2017, a magnitude 7.1 earthquake shook the city of Puebla, Mexico at 1:30 pm. The depth of the epicenter was 51 kilometers, classifying it as a shallow earthquake and leaving 1,000 injured or killed. Seven days before, the southern Mexico experienced a magnitude 8.1 earthquake, with casualties in the hundreds.

After the September 19 earthquake, Tzu Chi volunteers in Nuevo León, Mexico immediately reported the news back to the Tzu Chi Foundation. From September 24 and on, Tzu Chi volunteers traveled to Mexico for disaster relief. Volunteers from Taiwan, the United States, Argentina,

Ecuador and more with fluency in English and Spanish dove deep into the disaster areas to investigate and also motivate the locals to act as well. Chief of the global volunteers of Tzu Chi, Stephen Huang, US Tzu Chi Medical Foundation Martin Kuo and Henry Tuan, Taiwan Religious Department Tim Lu, Argentina volunteer Hong Liangdai visited senior government officials as they walked city to city, and door to door. They asked about each family's current needs while soothing their sufferings and documenting portfolios for further care. With a detailed listing of those affected by the disaster, they held a series of disaster relief and free clinics



from December 7th, providing cash assistance cards, blankets, and free medical service.

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### **2017.12.03**

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Since December 3, Tzu Chi volunteers from Taiwan, Mexico, United States, Argentina, Bolivia, Denmark, Honduras, China, Haiti, Paraguay, Brazil, and Ecuador heading to the disaster region successively. The first Taiwan group met in Taoyuan with Dr. Yeh Tian-Hao as team lead for TIMA. Along with Lee Yi-Kung, director of ER Dept. at the Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital, they provided a briefing to Dharma Master Cheng Yen who was there to attend the year-end blessing ceremony. Tzu Chi Medical Foundation CEO Lin Chin-Lon and Tzu Chi Foundation CEO Yen Po-Wen also conversed with the group. Experienced in disaster relief, CEO Lin advised them to prepare medicine for high altitude sickness and antibiotics for E. coli. He reminded the group to remain cautious and refrain from raw food to ensure healthy because of poor hygiene in the area.

This disaster relief in Mexico broke many records in Tzu Chi's history. For example, they traveled to every household to investigate, providing cash assistance card up to 8,000 Mexican Pesos (roughly 420 USD) for a family of three, which is about three months' worth of salary of the average person there. Household from

four to six received 12,000 Pesos, and household from seven and above received 16,000 Pesos. Tzu Chi volunteers packed the essentials in the Taoyuan Jing Si Hall, including medicines, mosquito repellents, lucky ornaments, Spanish Jing Si Aphorisms, and Master Cheng Yen's red envelopes. About twenty Tzu Chi volunteers headed to the Taoyuan International Airport at 8 pm, stopped over at Los Angeles after 11 hours flight, and arrived in Mexico at 4:30 am. The time difference between Taiwan and Mexico is fourteen hours.

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### **12.04**

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After arriving at Tláhuac, Mexico, the disaster relief team visited the city hall and decided to host a free clinic on the seventh. The city hall officially announced this date to be "Tzu Chi Day".

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### **12.05~06**

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The group of 138 Tzu Chi disaster volunteers separated into groups: General Matters, Setup, Registration, Medical, Investigation, Outside Security, Finance, Delivery, Essentials, and Moral Support. There were three consecutive days of distribution and free clinics, the group journeyed to three locations in Mexico City (convention center, basketball court, and city hall courtyard) starting at 8 am for the setup and the clean up after 5 pm.

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## 12.07

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### Tláhuac - The First Distribution and Clinic

The first essential distribution and clinic occurred inside a gathering center next to the Tláhuac City Hall. When the volunteers arrived, many citizens had already lined up stretching for blocks. Volunteers delivered cash assistance cards and explained how to use them. Blankets and Dharma Master's well wish letter were also delivered to each family. A total of 1,340 families received the supplies.

During the first free clinic, acupuncture was a surprising favorite. Although some residents harbored anxiety, they received relief from Chinese medicine and comforting words by doctors and volunteers. Their smiles were in full display.

Trinidad Jardines, a local volunteer, worked hard to obtain medicine. Director Lee Yi-Kung personally handled classification of the medicine, and prescribed to the patients according to the diagnosis. He was the first doctor signed up for this event. The clinic closed at 6 pm that day.



**The first disaster relief event was held at Tláhuac on December 7. Dr. Gao Zhongcheng from Argentina (Left) provides acupuncture service. Nurse Tseng Mei-Yu (Right) comforts the elder who has never received acupuncture. Taken by Zhuang Huizhen.**



## 12.08

### San Gregorio Atlapulco, Xochimilco - The Second Distribution and Clinic

The second distribution and free clinic took place at an outdoor basketball court in San Gregorio Atlapulco, Xochimilco. With experience this time around, the group worked efficiently and open the site for residents ahead of time at 9

am. Mayor Avelino Méndez Rangel expressed his gratitude to Tzu Chi considering the distance from Taiwan. To commemorate their love, he officially announced September to be the “Tzu Chi Month” and presented Tzu Chi certificate to commemorate the event. Over 1,290 households benefited from this distribution.



**The second disaster relief event was held at the national soccer stadium at Xochimilco on December 9. All processions ran smoothly and efficiently.**

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## 12.09

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### **Xochimilco - The Third Distribution and Clinic**

On the dawn of December 9, the temperature was a chilling two degree Celsius, the coldest we experienced since our arrival. The distribution and clinic took place in the national soccer field. Taiwanese representatives in Mexico and Taiwanese merchants also attended. Ambassador Carlos S. C. Liao also mentioned that Mexico was the first to send help in the infamous September 21 earthquake in Taiwan. He said, "Tzu Chi is a symbol of Taiwan's love. Taiwan is undoubtedly proud of them."

Before the distribution began, many citizens arrived for the clinic. Volunteer Hong Liangdai's husband, Dr. Gao Zhongcheng, who specializes in Chinese medicine, explained that this free clinic's goal was to alleviate their suffering. As an agriculture society, the majority of people who arrived at the clinic had symptoms of arthritis and other ailments related to body pain. A man who hobbled to the clinic with a cane received acupuncture. A smile brightened his face as he walked out of the clinic with his foot feeling much better. Back when he lived in Argentina, he was acquainted with Dr. Lin Shunzheng, who lived in the neighboring district and specialized in massage therapy. This time, Lin arrived with his son, who was currently studying Chinese medicine, to help. Gao's apprentice, Cai Mingming, also followed him to Mexico. Over 1,249 families received supplies on this day.

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## 12.10

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The second tier from Taiwan was led by Supt. Chien Sou-Hsin of the Taichung Tzu Chi hospital. Supt. Chao You-Chen of the Taipei Tzu Chi hospital, Director Juan Ying-Hsu of the Dalin Tzu Chi hospital, and many more transferred flights at the Los Angeles International Airport, arriving early in the morning on December 10. After joining force, they headed to Morelos, Mexico for another distribution and free clinic.

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## 12.11

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### **Tlaquiltenango - The Fourth Distribution and Clinic**

The fourth distribution and clinic took place at the event center of a water park in Tlaquiltenango, distributing essentials to 1,709 households, also including a dental office in the clinic. "The dental office is the highlight!" With the persuasion of Brother Stephen Huang, Dentist Kenneth Liao brought his dental team and tools to Mexico and had the assistance of two other dentists. The people in Mexico have a tendency to favor sugar, and therefore cavities are a major issue. Our team of dentists brought many soft-bristle toothbrushes and they taught the residents how to correctly brush and protect their teeth.



**The third disaster relief event was held at Tlaquiltenango, Morelos on December 11. After opening, the volunteers were incredibly busy, with a long queue for the clinic and pharmacy. Pharmacist Chen Hongyan (Middle) is part of the Taiwan Medical Association.**

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## 12.12

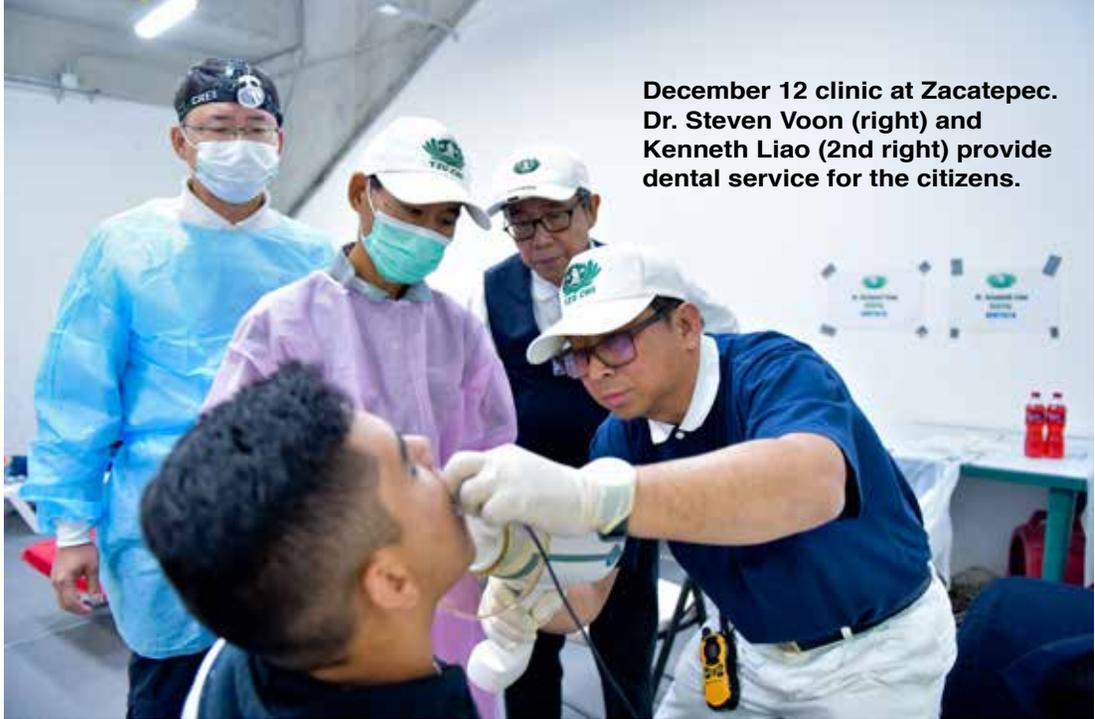
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### Zacatepec de Hidalgo - The Fifth Distribution and Clinic

Zacatepec de Hidalgo is an agriculture city primarily on sugar cane. The fifth distribution and clinic occurred in a national soccer stadium with a capacity for 25,000 people. The mayor of Zacatepec de Hidalgo announced December to

be “Tzu Chi Month”. Tzu Chi volunteers reached out to 1,349 households.

The mayor and the Health Bureau Director, Marco Antonio, arrived to comfort the citizens, and the mayor and his wife tried acupuncture for the first time. Because of language barriers, local teachers brought with them 31 Spanish and English translators.



**December 12 clinic at Zacatepec. Dr. Steven Voon (right) and Kenneth Liao (2nd right) provide dental service for the citizens.**

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### 12.13~14

#### **Jojutla - The Sixth and Seventh Distribution and Clinic**

Jojutla is one of the most disaster-struck cities during the earthquake. After the earthquake, public security was at its lowest. Therefore, Tzu Chi volunteers arranged for this to be the last distribution location to represent their efforts and hard work. The distribution spanned for two days because of the demand of services. On December 13 alone, over 1,629 households received supplies.

At three am citizens started to line-up near a soccer field. Mayor Alfonso Jesus Sotelo Martinez thanked everyone for coming and invited Tzu Chi to attend the Christmas Eve feast. At noon, Dr. Peter Chen and Dr. William Keh left the site and headed to Kimberly's home, age twenty-three and a mother of two. They helped debride her wounds and instructed her on follow-up care.

On the 14th, the mayor announced that December would be Jojutla's "Tzu Chi

Month". He also invited Tzu Chi to come at the end of every year to host a free clinic. About 1,208 households received supplies.

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### 12.15

#### **San Gregorio Atlapulco - The Eighth Distribution and Clinic**

On the 15th, Tzu Chi decided to add another distribution and clinic in the San Gregorio Church, their disaster relief base. It was meaningful to the local disaster relief volunteers that this last disaster relief event stationed at the 170-year-old church, which also symbolized the fusion of Catholicism and Buddhism. About 481 households received support. Ana, a dentist from Jojutla, not only provided free dental services for the last three clinics but also wrote a letter to thank Tzu Chi for their help and that she would forever remember their love. Tzu Chi's transnational disaster relief journey ended, and they expressed their wishes for the citizens to recover quickly.