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Rebuilding

February 13, 2010 in [Tales from Taiwan](#) by [prkatz](#) | [Permalink](#)

Paul Katz has previously reported on the rebuilding of Siaolin; see his earlier China Beat posts on the subject [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).

By Paul Katz

Just over five months have passed since the devastation wrought by Typhoon Morakot, and the survivors of the Siaolin Village 小林村 tragedy are coping as best they can with a lot of help from their friends, charitable organizations, and the government. However, the effects of the disaster still linger. Over 400 bodies of victims buried or washed away in the mudslide that followed hours of torrential rains will never be recovered, and there is not a large enough tract of arable land in the unscathed portions of Siaolin, or even all of Chia-hsien Township 甲仙鄉, to rebuild a community sufficient to house the 247 remaining households, meaning that the survivors have had to accept the reality of having “one village [scattered over] two locations” (一村兩地). Another touching story involves Siaolin’s children, many of whom still suffer emotional scars. The village’s [school-age kids](#) now have to attend class at various Chia-hsien schools, not knowing when or where Siaolin Elementary will ever be rebuilt.

Still, there is hope, and some good progress to report, with material reconstruction proceeding apace. Since last October, surviving villagers who had once crowded inside cramped temples have been living in temporary houses constructed by the ROC Red Cross in Shanlin 杉林 (a township in Kaohsiung County nearer to the Kaohsiung metropolis). More importantly, permanent homes are under construction, with some units now ready to move into.

The first permanent housing project, also located in Shanlin, has been constructed by the [Buddhist Compassion Relief Merit Society](#) (佛教慈濟功德會). Known as “[Great Love Village](#)” (大愛園區), this project is situated on 59.3 hectares of land and holds 1,500 housing units, built at a cost of NT\$3 million per unit. Construction on these [spacious and comfortable homes](#), complete with furniture, cooking utensils, and even plasma TVs, [wrapped up on January 30](#), and the new units will be made available for 500 disaster victim households from Siaolin and other communities on February 11, just [three days before the Lunar New Year](#). Approximately 70 Siaolin households are looking forward to setting up new homes in this village.

Work on the second permanent housing project, to be constructed by the government, is proceeding more slowly. These homes will be situated in the village of Wulipu 五里埔, located less than one kilometer from where Siaolin Village used to stand and also the site for the successful restaging of the annual Siraya Plains Aborigine 西拉雅平埔原住民族 ritual known as the “Siaolin Night Festival” (小林夜祭) ([discussed in an earlier post](#)). Construction on homes for 90 Siaolin households is slated to begin on March 1 and finish by August of the same year, but it is not clear whether the project will actually be able to proceed according to schedule.

And then there are the villagers who would prefer to do the rebuilding themselves, specifically 146 households who have petitioned the government to give them the right to [join forces with the ROC Red Cross in purchasing farmland](#) in Shanlin owned by the Hon Hai Precision Industry Company (鴻海科技集團). Some villagers simply want the chance to rebuild on their own; others have expressed concern that the standardized housing units in the “Great Love Village” will contribute to an erosion of their culture, with a few feeling disconcerted by reports claiming that [smoking, drinking, and betel nut chewing will be forbidden](#). Their plans appear to be going nowhere, however, as both the local and central [governments have declared their opposition](#) to any such arrangement. Villagers remain in largely good spirits, however, and plans are underway for a special Lunar New Year’s Eve party at the ROC Red Cross temporary housing units:

小林村 2010
「除夕大圍爐，小林人回家團圓」活動

邀請您一起來團聚

小林村民與各界貴賓大家好：
新的一年即將來臨，我們特別舉辦了「除夕大圍爐」春節活動，並提供包括趣味麻將大賽、懷舊童玩、運動大競賽、卡啦ok等一系列活動。
竭誠歡迎各位闔家蒞臨，一起迎接嶄新的一年！

活動時間：2010年2月13日，除夕晚間六點
活動地點：杉林月眉農場小林社區(組合屋)

敬祝
新年快樂·福虎生風

台灣八八水災小林村重建發展協會 敬上

In terms of cultural reconstruction, an important step forward occurred with the formal establishment of the "Association for the Reconstruction of Siaolin's Plains Aborigine Culture" (小林平埔原住民族文化重建協會), founded by Professor Chien Wen-min 簡文敏 and his colleagues. The Association has set up an office in the ROC Red Cross temporary housing units, and has also begun work on two research projects. The first involves the compilation of a documentary about Siaolin's past, as well as a database of audiovisual recordings. The second is to help plan an exhibition of Siaolin cultural artifacts to be held when a new museum opens as part of Wulipu's Plains Aborigine Cultural Park (平埔原住民族文化園區). Much of the work for these two projects will be done by Siaolin villagers. Plans are also underway to revive Siaolin's "Great Drum Troupe" (大鼓陣). Finally, the Association now has its own [website](#), which includes details about its [founding](#) and [goals](#), as well as an introduction to [Siaolin Village](#) and photos of the community [before the disaster](#) and in the [wake of its destruction](#). There is also a section for [donors](#).

Note: Many thanks to Hung Shu-fen 洪淑芬 for her assistance in collecting this information.

Tags: [Siaolin](#)