

Strengthening Youth Engagement and Community Impact at Tzu Chi UK

Storytelling, Resource Adaptation, and Programme Development



UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE

The Challenge

Tzu Chi UK has an established volunteer base and a wide range of community, environmental and educational activity. The project explored a practical question: how can initial interest, particularly among younger people, be converted into meaningful, repeat engagement while making existing Tzu Chi resources and community learning more useful in the UK?

Project Aim

To work collaboratively with Tzu Chi UK to understand youth engagement, document community impact, identify adaptable resources from Taiwan and the global Tzu Chi network, and develop practical tools for future programme development.

HOW I WORKED

Qualitative Interviews

4 preliminary semi-structured interviews exploring motivations, memorable experiences, barriers, youth engagement and ideas for sustained participation.

Resource Research

Review of Tzu Chi Taiwan and global educational/environmental resources, with attention to audience, methods, behaviour changes, and potential for UK adaptation.



Field Observation

Direct observation of Tzu Chi community activities, attendance at the UKADR conference, and conversations with volunteers/staff.

Community and Network Building

Participated in the UKADR Conference (14–15 September) alongside Tzu Chi, building connections with researchers, practitioners, and organisations working around disaster resilience and humanitarian response.

WHAT THE EVIDENCE SUGGESTS

Community is a retention asset

Interviewees highlighted welcoming volunteers, friendships, cultural exchange and a sense of belonging. One volunteer also described Tzu Chi as a place of reciprocal care, where helping others supported their own growth.

One-off participation needs a pathway

The challenge may be less about finding young people than creating a clear route from first activity → repeat participation → responsibility and leadership.

Global resources can support UK activity

Global Tzu Chi experience offers a substantial base for UK adaptation. Interview evidence also stressed localisation: learning from other branches while understanding UK culture and community needs.

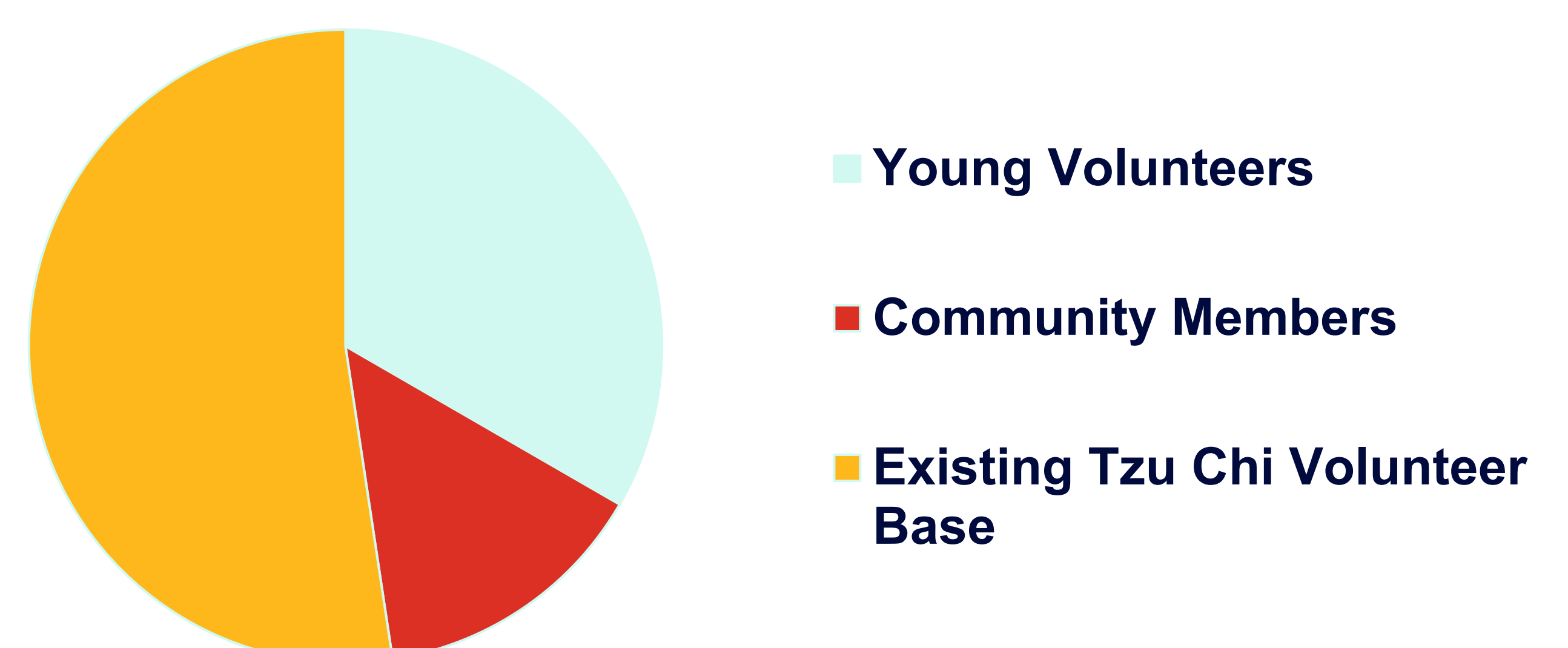
Time and visibility matter

Students and young adults may struggle with regular commitments, while limited online visibility can reduce awareness. Personal networks are important entry points, but social media can widen reach.

Low barriers can enable action

Young volunteers valued being able to join activities and make a tangible contribution without lengthy formal entry processes.

Tzu Chi Volunteer Makeup*



**Based on latest volunteering event numbers where n=21*

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TZU CHI UK

- Create a pathway beyond the first event:** Make it easy to attend, return, take responsibility, and lead.
- Make Tzu Chi easier for young people to discover:** Establish university partnerships (Tzu Ching), peer networks, and social-media visibility while communicating Tzu Chi's values alongside its activities.
- Adapt and learn rather than simply replicate:** Use Tzu Chi's global experience while systematically incorporating UK community feedback and local context.

LEADERSHIP LEARNING

I came into the placement thinking leadership meant producing a solution. My placement with Tzu Chi showed me another form of leadership: Wilson's practical experience meant people sought his perspective at the UKADR conference without him having to ask for a platform. I learned that leadership can sometimes simply mean showing up, contributing and being willing to share what you know.

Mia Strickland - University of Cambridge

UNSDGs: 17 - Partnerships for the Goals; 11 - Sustainable Cities and Communities; 13 - Climate Action
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Evidence base: 4 interviews; Resource Research; Community Observation ; Organisational Conversations ; UKADR (14–15 September 2026)

Evidence limitation: Preliminary qualitative findings from a small sample; not representative of all Tzu Chi volunteers or UK youth.