

Third Relief Fund Distribution in Miyagi Prefecture, Japan

Written by Kay Tsao

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Tzu Chi Foundation, Japan Chapter departed for Miyagi Prefecture on July 28 to distribution relief fund for the third time. The distribution took place in Kesenuma City, northeast of Miyagi Prefecture. Around 7,700 households received relief fund from 30,000 yen to 70,000 yen, depending on the number of people in the households.

Tzu Chi Foundation has been providing relief aid to the prefectures of Miyagi, Iwate and Yamanashi since the 9.0 magnitude earthquake and tsunami on March 11. The first distribution was from June 9 to June 12, delivering relief fund to a total of 6,692 households. The second distribution was from July 16 to July 18, with a total of 6,482 households receiving relief fund.

On July 28, 117 volunteers of Tzu Chi Foundation, including 62 volunteers from Taiwan and 55 from Japan Chapter, departed from Tokyo to Kesenuma. Before the earthquake and tsunami, Kesenuma was a popular tourist spot, well known for its abundance of seafood and the produce of fish fin. According to the owner of one of the traditional Japanese hotels, right now was supposed to be the hot season for tourists, but there were only volunteers and construction workers staying in the hotel at this moment. The two hotels that Tzu Chi volunteers stayed in also served as temporary shelters for victimized residents whose houses had been washed away by the tsunami.



After hours of bus ride and ferry, the volunteers were stunned by the sight in front of them. Two huge ferries were washed onto the land from the harbor by the tremendous force of tsunami. All the stores and residential houses around the harbor were either seriously damaged or simply just became flat, leaving only the base construction at the bottom of the houses. Part of the water from the tsunami still remained on land, making the path to the inland muddy and difficult to walk.

The residents' response for the relief fund distribution was overwhelming. The waiting line starting from inside of the distribution building went all the way to the street outside. By the time the volunteers rushed from the distribution area to the harbor, the last ferry had left. Tzu Chi volunteers had to negotiate with the private ferry rental company to provide delivery after the last scheduled ferry.



For the four days of distribution, the volunteers travelled by ferry and bus everyday from the

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hotel to the distribution area back and forth. At the end of the day, they always had to be careful when waiting for the ferry at the harbor because of the flooding water from the rising tide. However, the heartbroken sight of the damaged city and the anxiety on the faces of the residents only made the volunteers even firmer and resolute to continue the relief aid distribution, hoping to ease the pain of the victimized residents.