

Volunteers in Beijing Visit Homes of Flood-Hit Residents

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation

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Monday July 30 was an important day for a team of 51 volunteers in Beijing. They carried out the first distribution of relief goods to 5,000 families struggling to recover from the worst flooding in 60 years and then visited some of the families, to offer comfort and concern.

Since the torrential rain began on July 21, Tzu Chi Foundation has delivered, by air, sea and land, a large quantity of relief goods, including 5,800 eco-blankets and 2.5 tons of instant rice. After careful preparation, the volunteers decided to hold the first distribution on July 30 in three places in Fangshan district, the worst affected area -- Zhangfang, Qinglonghu and Zhoukoudian townships. A total of 51 volunteers took part, including Wang Pen-jung, president of Tzu Chi University, Her Rey-sheng, the foundation's spokesman, and Hsieh Ching-kuei, head of the foundation's religious affairs department; they were three of those who made the long journey from Hualien in eastern Taiwan.



The distribution was held in a plaza belonging to the Jicaihong Farm Company in Zhangfang township. The opening remarks were made by Volunteer Zeng Yun-ji: she read out a letter from Master Cheng Yen that was delivered to each of the recipients, in which she expressed her condolences and her wish that everyone can have a peaceful life, help each other and re-build their homes and community. Then the volunteers gave out the relief goods; as they did so, they bowed 90 degrees, to express the sincere gratitude and blessings from the depths of their heart. The goods included the Master's letter, a copy of Jing Si Aphorisms, bottled water, instant noodles, instant rice, an eco-blanket, clothing and a pack of daily necessities – toothpaste, toothbrush, towel and flashlight.

Among the recipients, there was great joy in receiving the goods; they were very happy at the concern and encouragement shown by the donation. Among them was Wang Youli, a strong built man whose family has been badly hit by the flooding. He was so overwhelmed by a sense of gratitude for the goods received from Taiwan that he broke down in tears: "I have lost all that I have," he said. "The floodwaters have washed everything away. My mother and my brother and his family have gone to live in the house of another person." The volunteers consoled him, encouraging him to treasure what he had and to believe that things will turn for the better.



Brave mother rescues her daughter

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After the distribution, the volunteers and the relief team went to visit residents in Nanbaidai village in Zhangfang township who had been affected by the floods. The small trees at the entrance were still covered by water and a bridge with the road leading into the village had been badly damaged. The lady volunteers had to go carefully to cross it, holding hands with one another as they clambered over the debris.

They went to the home of Wang Zhixia; it used to be a happy household full of life but has been severely damaged by the floodwaters and is not fit for habitation. She told the volunteers that, when the waters rushed in, she carried her daughter on her back and onto the roof; the daughter is not able to walk on her own. At the start of this year, she had her right leg broken in a car accident which took the life of her younger sister. "I have spent all the family's savings on medical treatment for my daughter," said Wang. "These floods have made a bad situation even worse."



While her mother was talking, her daughter thought about how she could not move freely and how, at the moment of danger, her mother risked her own life to save her. She could not contain her emotions and burst into tears. The volunteers consoled her softly, saying: "first, look after your own health. That is the best thing you can do for your mother."

The volunteers brought instant rice that can be eaten simply by adding hot water. Happy at this good fortune, one middle-aged lady said: "I have been eating instant noodles for a long time. Finally, I can have a change of taste." What the volunteers brought was their love together with the instant rice; they brought the concern of people around the world, which meant a great deal to these simple villagers. For a short time, it lifted from their shoulders the pressure of re-building their homes.