

## Tzu Chi Begins Relief Operation For Philippines

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation

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The Tzu Chi Foundation has begun relief effort for the victims of Typhoon Haiyan which devastated the Philippines. Packing wind speeds of up to 315 kilometers an hour, the typhoon was the most deadly ever to hit the country. Worst hit were the provinces of Leyte and Samar. It was estimated a death toll over 2000. The need for relief goods is enormous.

On November 13th, 40 Tzu Chi volunteers grouped up as assessment team traveled from Cebu to Tacloban city to carry out the first stage of the relief work and their caring love. The twelve members of Tzu Chi International Medical Association (TIMA) also entered the city and brought in medical assistance for the survivors.

On November 11, volunteers in Taipei and Hualien began their part of relief work, soon after receiving news of the disaster and realizing its enormity. They are packing goods that will be sent to the Philippines by the air force.



At the Jing Si Abode in Hualien, Dharma masters and volunteers worked together to pack instant rice and dehydrated vegetables into 1,056 boxes. The instant rice can be easily and quickly served after soaking in either cold or hot water therefore it is an ideal food for disaster relief. Unfortunately, the highway between Hualien and Suao, on the east coast of Taiwan, was closed on November 11 due to heavy rain; so the goods could not be shipped by road, leaving rail as the best alternative. Everyone at the Abode raced against time to load the items into trucks in time to catch the 3:20 p.m. train. In the train station, volunteers had to hand-carry the boxes one by one and load them onto the train. The train took the goods to Yilan county, from where they were taken by truck to Hsinchu in northwest Taiwan.

At the same time, on the west coast of Taiwan, Tzu Chi volunteers came together to pack 30,000 eco-blankets. The instant rice and the blankets were due for shipment by air on November 12th.



“In the Philippines, Tzu Chi volunteers have set up coordination centers in Cebu and Manila,” said Wang Yun-jing, deputy-director of the Foundation’s Religious Culture & Humanitarian Aid Department. “The Cebu center is closer to the disaster area and is also the connection point for local volunteers from around the Philippines. Volunteers there are arranging warehouses and transportation.”

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Last September, the city of Zamboanga in the southern Philippines was devastated by a civil war. Volunteers in the central Taiwan city of Taichung are building 160 pre-fabricated classrooms for students, so that they can continue their education. The classrooms will now be sent to the typhoon-affected areas as temporary shelters for survivors. Volunteers from the Philippines have gone to Taichung, to learn the technology of how to assemble the pre-fabricated classrooms.