

Tzu Chi Provides Relief After Typhoon Koppu in the Philippines

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation

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On October 18, Typhoon Koppu (Lando) made landfall in the Philippines, wreaking havoc in several parts of the country. A report from the National Disaster Risk Reduction & Management Council said that the flooding had displaced over 500,000 people. Koppu, the second strongest typhoon to hit the disaster-weary country this year, then moved over vast swathes of Luzon for three days, bringing torrential rains that triggered landslides and massive flooding. The death toll climbed to over 40. The typhoon inundated fields and flattened crops in the disaster areas. The rice crops, which were ready for harvest, were completely destroyed.

Tzu Chi volunteers in the Philippines immediately set out for Nueva Ecija, an area hard hit by the typhoon in Luzon, to conduct a disaster survey and provide relief efforts, including distribution of relief goods and a cash-for-work program.

"The floodwaters rose to the rooftop and all our belongings were washed away. Even our neighbor's house was swept away by the floods." said Myrabel Mago, one of the typhoon victims.

Cash-for-work program to clean homes

Flash floods triggered landslides and movement of logs, which were washed down from the mountains, causing serious damage to property. All that remained after the waters receded was mud and debris. The typhoon badly affected the residents' quality of life. Therefore the Tzu Chi Philippines Chapter decided to roll out a cash-for-work program. It implemented the program by forming 10 people in one group to clean each house together. The survivors said they are very happy to clean the surroundings and help each other.



"Implementing a cash-for-work program here will be very effective because residents will be able to clean their homes while also getting compensated for it," said Alfredo Li, CEO of the Tzu Chi Philippines Chapter. The program not only organized the residents to clean up their communities; the relief fund provided also helped them to purchase immediately the food or building materials they needed.

The city government brought in large equipment and trucks to help speed up the cleaning process. Helping to lead Tzu Chi's project here in Gapan was the city's mayor, Maricel Natividad, who managed to recruit nearly 400 residents in one day. She expressed her gratitude for Tzu Chi's relief effort. It gave residents the opportunity to come together and help their own community. Within half a day, the main road of the community was cleared and is now operational.

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Clean-up of school grounds

Cabanatuan, situated within an hour drive of Gapan City, was also a victim of the typhoon's wrath. Sumacab Norte Elementary School, a local school in the city, was totally inundated with mud. As soon as Tzu Chi volunteers surveyed the situation, they brought in clean-up equipment and set up a cash-for-work program to recruit local residents to clear the mud. Some 200 cash-for-work participants have been mobilized to help clear the mud and debris. On October 30 to 31, Tzu Chi also conducted a clean-up drive in San Josef Elementary School. From October 27 to 31, there were over 4,000 participants in the program.

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