

Tzu Chi Provides Supplies to Fire Survivors in Quezon City

Written by Donna Nyanza Nakar
Monday, 26 April 2010 00:00



According to the initial report of the Social Service Development Department (SSDD) of Quezon City, approximately 3,000 families or equivalent to 18,000 individuals lost their homes after a large fire devoured numbers of households which were made of light materials in Barangay Damayang Lagi, located at E. Rodriguez, Sr. Avenue last April 25.

In the sad tragedy, a man was confirmed dead after trying to escape and save his belongings out of the blaze.

Almost all the residents were shocked and baffled when the tragedy happened. "At first, we just saw some smoke then it suddenly flared up, that is why I yelled to the others to run. Then, we searched for water but the supply was not enough and it was hard to put out the fire because it was too intense," shared by 47 year-old survivor Felix.

As stated in reports, it was past three o'clock in the afternoon when the fire started and around eight o'clock in the evening when the fire totally ceased out. Fire fighters who responded faced too much difficulty to extinguish the fire because of the strong wind and narrow lanes leading the burning area.

Until this moment, officials are still on investigation about the source of the fire that obliterated more than 600 households of informal settlers.

To identify the condition of the survivors, Tzu Chi volunteers personally surveyed the area early morning of April 26. On their way, the volunteers experienced the heavy flow of traffic concurrently with the hot weather.



When they arrived at the scene, Tzu Chi volunteers saw the pathetic condition of the survivors who temporarily live outside the establishments that were situated in front of their houses. Among the sad pictures noticeable at the place was a family lying on a cardboard waiting for someone who will offer support; siblings who were crying because they have not eaten breakfast; residents without t-shirts because they have not saved any of their belongings; and shock is reflected on almost all of the survivors.

Just like Rosemarie Sisneros, 43 years old, who was trying to be calm in spite of the tragedy that devastated her family. "Now we are just resting and we are thinking how to start all over again. We are really in need of financial support that is why we are thinking where we could find money to repair our house."

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On the other hand, there were some who were still at the scene where the fire took place trying to find other things that can be used or sold to junk shops like galvanized iron sheet and iron bars. One of them is 55 year-old Nelson Mendez. "There are lots of fire disasters that we have encountered and I think this is the fifth. But, this is the worst fire that happened because almost all of the possessions we have turned into ashes and the fire fighters were not able to suppress it because the fire was too intense." Mendez also added the primary needs of the survivors like him that almost lost everything. "Clothes and foods are the basic needs of humans; those are the things we lack at the moment."

After they have interacted with the residents, Tzu Chi volunteers correlated to the SSDD to take the official list of the fire survivors. Usually, the official list is the basis of Tzu Chi Foundation in giving relief to the fire survivors. Since SSDD has not yet finished interviewing one member of the each family in the area, Tzu Chi volunteers offered food and water to end the hunger and quench the thirst of the survivors.



It was past one o'clock in the afternoon when one of the vehicles of Tzu Chi Foundation delivered instant rice in reusable bowls and another truck containing the water purifying system for the drinking water supply of the survivors came. As the truck opened, survivors gradually poured in the venue and patiently lined up despite the scorching heat of the sun. When the 25 Tzu Chi volunteers and local volunteers from Marikina City saw the continuous crowding of the people, they tried to quickly organize the line to prevent rivalry and struggle while distributing food.

One of the hundreds who lined up and was luckily given instant rice in reusable bowl was 21 year-old Cristine Bristol who, at that moment, have not eaten lunch yet. "Thank you very much to Tzu Chi Foundation, now, I can eat lunch. We were very hungry but we need to line up there at the other side to list down our names to have food," Bristol said.

The 45-year-old victim Amado Abatayo gave his judgment to the taste of the instant rice from Taiwan and admired the reusable bowl used as container. "Delicious and has a unique taste. And it was even placed in a reusable bowl that we can use again in a long period of time because it is durable. Thank you very much for your help to us fire survivors of Damayang Lagi."

As a whole, a total of 956 individuals were given instant rice while those who wanted to drink could go back with their own water container, as long as they want, to the water purifying system.

"At this moment, I would like to thank Tzu Chi Foundation for the continuous care and support to the people who became survivors of calamities like fire and flood. Thank you and we congratulate you. SSDD salutes all of you," a message of gratitude from Cynthia Oria, Head of Welfare and Relief Division under SSDD, for the support given by Tzu Chi Foundation.

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