

## Given Supplies Before Refugees Start a New Life

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation

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On October 7, nine Tzu Chi volunteers went to a refugee center in Auckland to distribute supplies to 155 refugees from 46 families who will move out of the center to start a new life: Twenty-two of the families will settle on the North Island and 24 on the South Island. Ninety percent of them came from Myanmar and the rest from Ethiopia, Uganda, Columbia, and Bhutan.

At around 10 a.m., a truck from the refugee center arrived at the local Tzu Chi office. The volunteers helped load 101 comforters, comforter covers, and bed sheets, 133 sets of pillows and cases, and 22 water bottles and cooking woks onto the truck. Then they set out for the refugee center, where they unloaded the goods and laid them out in order as the refugees waited patiently in their seats.

Volunteer Zheng Liang-yu (鄭良宇), who is from Malaysia, talked to the Burmese refugees and found out that they had fled to Malaysia and had stayed there for many years before New Zealand took them in as refugees. Some of them had had contact with Tzu Chi in Malaysia and had even participated in Tzu Chi activities there.

“Where do the refugees come from? To what extent can the local government assist them? And how is Tzu Chi helping them?” asked Chen Wen-xiang (陳文祥), a new volunteer who was visiting New Zealand from Malaysia.

Volunteer Zhou Xi-yao (周希耀) explained that the refugees in New Zealand come from many countries. The government provides them with housing and helps them make the transition to life there. Tzu Chi volunteers give them daily supplies before they move out of the refugee center.

Zhou encouraged Chen to overcome his shyness and experience the joy of giving by presenting the goods with both hands while bowing deeply to the refugees as a sign of respect. He also invited Chen to continue volunteering for Tzu Chi when he returned to Malaysia. Chen and his wife said that they would certainly join meaningful events like this one in the future.

After receiving her goods, Kyaw Mi Mar Aye from Myanmar expressed her desire to join as a volunteer, and she gave her new address to the volunteers. As they were driving away, she ran after the volunteers' car and reminded them to contact her. The volunteers were touched by her desire to help.

Source: Tzu Chi Quarterly winter 2010