

## Foundation prepares second major relief money distribution in Japan

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation  
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Tzu Chi is preparing a second major distribution of relief money to the victims of the earthquake and tsunami which devastated northeast Japan, giving funds to 10,000 households which will benefit 50,000 people. It also plans to subsidize the lunch boxes of 3,000 students and faculty at 17 schools.

A second team of 37 volunteers left Taipei on July 14 for the hardest-hit zones, Yamada and tsuchi in Iwate Prefecture, and were joined by 71 local Japanese volunteers, to make a team of nearly 100. They were scheduled to leave for Yamada and tsuchi from the foundation's Tokyo Chapter at 6 a.m. on July 15. First, they would clean and decorate the distribution venue. Then, on July 16 to 18, they would divide into two groups for the distribution and return to Taiwan on July 19.

This time the volunteers planned to distribute not only to Rikuzentakata and Kamaishi in Iwate Prefecture but also Yamada and tsuchi, which are close to Kamaishi, the area worst hit by the disaster. The earthquake, measuring 9.0 on the Richter scale, and the tsunami devastated tsuchi, causing oil pipes to crack and triggering a series of fires. The town's mayor died in the disaster and over 10,000 residents are still missing after the tsunami.

In addition, the foundation has decided to subsidize the fee for the bento, or lunch box, for 17 schools in the disaster area, which will benefit 3,000 students and faculty. The 17 include three kindergartens, nine elementary and five high schools. The government authorizes the content of the bento – cooked rice, a piece of fruit and vegetable and a small bottle of milk – to be sold by vendors. The content is the same for students of all grades. The key to the smooth distribution of the relief is communication and co-ordination.



In order to understand better the situation in tsuchi, the general supervisor of Tzu Chi's Japan Chapter, Chen Jin-Fa, accompanied by Brother Liang-Da Chen, visited the chief of the general affairs section at tsuchi city hall, Mr Hirano, to discuss the relief program. He said that he hoped that Tzu Chi could deliver as much aid as possible and that the city government will fully support Tzu Chi. Mr Kumagai, a section chief at the city hall of Rikuzentakata city, who joined the first Tzu Chi Relief team, told the Chens he would join the volunteer team again this time: "I saw how delighted local people were to receive the relief money from Tzu Chi," he said. "This is how Taiwanese are famous for their great love."

Among the volunteers from Taiwan who has taken part in both relief teams is Chang Yi-chun, whose wife passed away at the end of March. He let go of his personal grief, to join the distribution. "Although my wife died, she educated me and sent me to Japan after seeing the suffering of so many people," he said. "She wanted me to let go of our personal love and take

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her love to Japan by loving and caring for more people in need.”

Tzu Chi went into action in northeast Japan, within hours of the disaster, and has continued its relief work ever since, distributing money, relief goods and letters of condolence to the victims, raising money in 39 countries worldwide and drawing up plans for long-term assistance.

This work has involved thousands of volunteers, to prepare and deliver aid and raise the money. Because Tzu Chi volunteers always understand and empathize with people in need, the circle of their love keeps growing. They expect the victims to re-build their home as soon as possible, helped by the warmth of this love from Taiwan.