

Tzu Chi Foundation Holds the 4th Relief Fund Distribution in Japan

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A Tzu Chi Foundation relief team departed for Japan on August 25, to carry out the organization's fourth aid distribution in earthquake-ravaged towns.

From August 27-29, they distributed over 341,000,000 yen of relief funds to about 6,400 households. After the distribution, they will head for Kamaishi City to sign a memorandum of understanding with the local government, where Tzu Chi will provide financial support, for student lunches and school bus transport fees, to communities in the disaster area.

Tzu Chi was the first foreign NGO to distribute relief funds in Japan. Since the earthquake and tsunami six months ago, Tzu Chi has held three large relief distributions, benefiting 21,000 families, and overall plans to distribute aid to 150,000 families affected by the disaster. On August 25, the latest relief aid team headed to Japan to deliver care and love to survivors.

Ofunato City and Minamisanriku Village, the two target areas for this round of relief, were both seriously damaged in the quake and were directly hit by the tsunami. Over 25% of the buildings were flattened or destroyed, leaving around 3,000 people dead or missing.

Once the flight arrived in Tokyo, Wu Fu-Chuan, the leader of the relief aid team, and 38 volunteers from Taiwan teamed up with local Tzu Chi volunteers. Volunteers from both sides had been coordinating transportation and personnel through online video meetings.

Chen Jin-Fa, the supervisor of aid efforts in Japan, said, "We respect every resident who comes for the relief fund. Although the amount of the relief fund is not much, it gives the residents hope for their lives and courage to go on." Chen recounted meeting an elderly Japanese couple who survived the tsunami, but who had felt hopeless and lost when pondering their future. The husband had even contemplated ending his life. After encountering Tzu Chi volunteers, the man said he felt his heart warm, and once again acquired the courage to go on. He said that he would live another 30 years. He noted how Tzu Chi had accomplished what other organizations were not able to, and hoped that a Tzu Chi gathering place could be formed in his local community.

After the distribution, on August 29 the relief aid team signed a contract with Takenori Naganoda, the mayor of Kamaishi City, where Tzu Chi volunteered to pay the cost of lunch for students at 18 schools (an estimated 126,000,000 yen) and also cover their school bus fees (about 28,550,000 yen).

Translated by Kay Tsao