

Volunteers Bring Food, Clothes to 7,000 Flood Evacuees in Manila

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On June 24 and 25, volunteers in Manila delivered food and clothing to 7,000 people in Metro Manila who were forced to leave their homes by Typhoon Meari. They returned to an area of the city where they played a major role in relief work after Typhoon Ketsana (Ondoy) in September 2009.

More than 500,000 people were affected by the typhoon which struck the Philippines on June 16. Chinese and Filipino volunteers immediately went into action in Marikina city, a district of Metro Manila, where they delivered help to the victims of Typhoon Ketsana. Volunteers in Marikina also offered their time and service even when they, too, were affected by the calamity. The volunteers distributed more than 5,000 vitamin-fortified breads and biscuits and 1,800 bowls with vegetarian meals to families housed inside the elementary schools of H. Bautista, Nangka and Malanday on June 24 and 25. Also, on June 25, the volunteers distributed 1,400 packs of used clothing to the evacuees in H. Bautista and Malanday Elementary Schools after those in Nangka had returned home.



Alfredo Li, chief executive officer of Tzu Chi in the Philippines, praised the dedication of the local volunteers in Marikina for their tireless help in the relief efforts in times of disasters such as this. "The effort of our local volunteers here in Marikina is admirable, for they offer selfless service even when they too need help for themselves," he said. Among them was 31-year-old Rochelle Abella who lives in Phase II of Balubad Settlement Site in Barangay Nangka, a low-lying community alongside the Marikina river. With other local volunteers, Abella helped to evacuate their neighbors and monitor the condition of the evacuees in Nangka Elementary School since the evening of June 23. "We wanted to be alert about the situation because we don't want Ondoy to repeat itself. I, too, worry about my family but it is my joy to serve my fellowmen because it is part of my vow as a Tzu Chi volunteer," Abella said.



As the waters rushed through the streets, the local volunteers were still able to wear their white caps and gray shirts neatly during the relief efforts, as if they were the things they first stacked in their bags before fleeing their houses. Their efforts were greatly appreciated by the victims who repeatedly expressed their thanks to the volunteers who went to comfort them. "The Tzu Chi Foundation has readily helped us ever since Ondoy devastated us two years ago. I feel it is right to give back something to other people through my donation," said 56-year-old Enrique Basubas, a tricycle driver who is a regular donor to its charity missions through filling his coin bank. He brought his family to the evacuation center to escape the rising waters from the Marikina River a few meters from their house in Phase II of Balubad in Barangay Nangka.

