

Tzu Chi Launches Cash-for-Relief Program after Ecuador Floods

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation
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Tzu Chi volunteers in the south American country of Ecuador have launched a ‘Cash-for-Relief’ program to help residents clean their communities after damage caused by torrential rain. It is the foundation’s second project in the country after relief provided after a serious earthquake in April 2016.

In early April this year, three provinces of Ecuador were struck by heavy rain that caused extensive damage. A total of 200,000 people were affected, with the damage most severe in Manabi province. Because of contacts made during the earthquake relief last year, Tzu Chi immediately moved into action. This involved both local volunteers and also those from the United States and Argentina. They went to survey the damage in two districts in Manabi, Portoviejo and Santa Ana, where nearly 3,400 households were badly affected. They visited Fernando Cedeno, Mayor of Santa Ana, to discuss the details of the ‘Cash-for-Relief’ program, giving each participant US\$15 (NT\$450) relief fund a day.

The Mayor was moved by this act of love and expressed his happiness: “On April 7, Santa Ana and other districts were hit by torrential rain. Then the Tzu Chi volunteers telephoned me. Their spirit is to do good by helping other. The key is strength through unity, to provide help to those who need it.”



George Chang, a Tzu Chi volunteer from the United States, was very concerned for the victims of the floods. He hoped that he could organize the residents of Santa Ana to rebuild their community together. “Today (April 24), we lunched Cash-for-Relief; the idea is to inspire the people in Santa Ana to work together. We have 120 people joined us today, tomorrow we plan to have 1000 people.” Brother Zhang hoped that, with more people taking part, the city will soon return to normality.

The heavy floods left mud and sludge everywhere, so that children could not go to school. On the first day of the program, the residents started to clean two schools and the roads around them. Through the joint efforts of everyone, they cleared a large amount of mud and sludge and made the school surroundings clean again. One local resident who took part wholeheartedly was Luis: “Here today, Tzu Chi has helped to clean up the school. We believe that unity is strength.”

Hong Liang-dai, a volunteer who came from Argentina, saw the happiness on the faces of the local residents. She said: “We are truly very happy that Tzu Chi could come here as quickly as possible and enable local people come together to clean their community.”

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Disasters have no feeling; but, among people, there is love. A natural disaster caused great damage; then Tzu Chi again brought together everyone's energy. This brought the hope and strength of everyone to rebuild their home.