

Volunteers Prepare to Help Survivors of Rio Janeiro Floods

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation
Sunday, 11 April 2010 00:00



The 140 Tzu Chi members and volunteers in Brazil are preparing to help the residents of Rio de Janeiro, which has experienced the heaviest rainfall in 30 years, leaving hundreds of people dead and missing.

The downpour began on April 5 and, in a period of 24 hours, dumped 28 centimeters of rain, the largest amount in a single day for three decades. Rio de Janeiro was ill prepared for the deluge, which flooded streets and homes and paralyzed the city; the mayor asked people in the downtown areas to stay at home. Worst hit were the shanty towns on the mountains overlooking the city, the second largest in Brazil with about 12 million people in the greater metropolitan area. Residents of these shanty towns live in makeshift homes of wood, plastic and corrugated iron which could not resist the nearly 200 mudslides caused by the rain. They poured down the mountains, washing away everything in their path; the residents fled for safety but many were trapped inside and could not get out in time. The homes were destroyed, along with everything inside. The official death toll is nearly 100, with many more feared missing.

In the face of this catastrophe, the Tzu Chi community in Brazil, which includes over 100 members and about 40 volunteers, said that they would do all they could to help those affected by the floods. They live in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo. Lin He-shen, deputy chief of the foundation in Brazil, said that, once the situation had stabilized, they would investigate the needs of people and provide food baskets and blankets. All of the Tzu Chi members and volunteers themselves are safe.

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