

## Uniforms, Stationery to Needy Students in Guatemala

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation  
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Members of the foundation in the central American state of Guatemala have been giving school uniforms and stationery to needy students, to encourage them to remain in school. They held the first distribution on January 17 at the Escuela Primaria Villas de Oriente in Palencia, a district of the capital, Guatemala city.

Serious flooding last year brought hardship to Guatemala. Many parents cannot afford the cost of uniforms and stationery for their children; for those families with many children, the cost of these items is a heavy burden.

On January 17th, volunteers visited the Escuela Primaria Villas de Oriente. Taiwan volunteer Chi-wang and local volunteer Carlos carefully hung up a photo of Dharma Master Cheng Yen at the distribution site. Another local volunteer, Ingrid, who was wearing a gray Tzu Chi trainee uniform with a neck brace, took the opportunity to show her dedication by putting in order the flags of Buddhism and Tzu Chi. One of the school teachers, Román, also joined in by hanging the banner. The students helped to move the chairs and their parents put the seats in order. Some students came up to help, by moving the uniforms and stationery onto the site.



The items to be distributed included schoolbags, a whole set of stationery and school uniforms; they were neatly placed on the tables. For boys, the polo shirts were embroidered with the Tzu Chi logo and trousers were arranged by sizes. For girls, the skirts were tailor-made for each individual, with the name sown on each one. Eight teachers prepared the teaching materials, useful gifts, drinks and snacks for students and their parents.

When it was time for the distribution, the parents accompanied with their families entered the school. The wife of the Mayor of Palencia, Zaida, and a representative of the Northern Guatemala Education Department, Alfonso, invited local government officials to take part. In addition, staff from the Taiwan Embassy and Technical Group in Guatemala and their families came – in total, about 30 guests. The teachers led the students to line up in formation for the opening ceremony. The students held up their hands and sang “Love and Care for All”, praying that people all over the world be spared from suffering. It was a simple ceremony but full of meaning for both parents and students.



During the distribution, the volunteers invited the government officials to give the school items

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and their blessings to the students. The representative of Guatemala Education Department, Alfonso, was delighted to help each student put on their schoolbag. The president of the Taiwan Technical Group, Pan Sheng-cai, helped to hand out the uniforms. The president of the Central America Trade Development Service, Wei Yao-chi, the secretary of the Taiwan Embassy in Guatemala, Ms. Liang, and members from the Technical Group distributed the items to the students with the same warmth as if they were the parents of the students.

After the students received the schoolbags and the stationery sets, their faces were full of joy and they sat on the ground. Volunteers Ke and Chi-wang gave the juice and snacks to the local participants and thanked them. The distribution ended with warmth and laughter after group photos of the volunteers and the teachers.

Translated by Gloria Chou