

Volunteers Give Aid Money to 1,300 Families Hit by Tembin

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation
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After Typhoon Tembin devastated the southern tip of Taiwan, on August 29, Tzu Chi volunteers distributed aid money to more than 1,300 families in the worst affected areas. They also began to draw up plans for medium- and long-term help for them.

The typhoon made landfall on August 24, dropping 28.5 inches of rain on Pingtung county in south Taiwan. During the morning of August 24, Hengchun received 20 inches of rain, the highest amount in a single night since 1896. The waters reached as high as 9.8 feet in some places, flooding homes; the winds blew off rooftops and toppled trees. Tzu Chi volunteers moved into action, delivering hot meals to the affected people and helping them clean their homes.

On August 28, Typhoon Tembin turned back and skirted past Taiwan without making landfall.

On August 29 came the next stage of the relief operation – the distribution by 350 volunteers of ‘consolation money’ of NT\$5,000-NT\$10,000 to 1,339 families, according to the level of damage they suffered. Of these, 1,129 were Hengchun township, 190 in Checheng township and 20 in Manjhoun township.

Chou Mei-li, the wife of the head of Shanjiu village, arranged an old people’s center in Hengchun as Tzu Chi’s temporary location for the distribution of the aid. Ms. Chou, leaders of 34 neighborhoods and 16 residents joined the distribution and to comfort their fellow residents. “Of the 34 neighborhoods in the village, 29 are devastated,” she said. “I know the damage is serious. There is nothing more important than to help the victims on the front line.”



As they walked on the slippery, mud-covered road, the hearts of the volunteers ached; they felt the suffering of the survivors, making them walk faster to their homes. One was 51-year-old Han Jui-chen, a single parent; she has survived two major car accidents, which left her with limited mobility. She lives with her elder sister Jui-mei, 57, a widow. “When the water started to flood into my house, I could not walk,” she said. “All I could do was watch the water pour in. I am very thankful that Tzu Chi volunteers brought me a hot meal while the power and water were cut off. There is a volunteer’s home in my community which was flooded too, but he still came to help us to clean up first.”

At the same time as providing the hot food and the money, the foundation is also considering how to provide medium- and long-term help. This includes how to repair homes that have been seriously damaged: help disadvantaged families: aid for tuition: medical care and environment clean-up. Volunteers have also prepared packages of daily necessities.

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One example of someone who needs long-term help is Han Cheng-li, a 30-year-old fork-lift driver; he used to have a stable income to support his family. Unfortunately, last year, a car accident left him with a compound fracture in both legs. The volunteers presented him and his family with emergency relief money and a letter of consolation from Master Cheng Yen; in future, they will continue to provide help to the family so that it can become self-reliant again.

The new school year is about to begin. The volunteers will ask the residents if they have difficulty paying tuition.

In her letter of consolation, Dharma Master Cheng Yen said that her heart went out to all the people affected by Tembin. "I represent all Tzu Chi volunteers around the world in giving our care and blessings to you," she wrote.