

Tzu Chi in France Give Relief Fund to Flood Survivors

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation
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Tzu Chi volunteers in France have given relief fund to the victims of the country's worst flooding in 150 years. On June 20, a team of eight volunteers left Paris for Salbris, a commune in the Loir-et-Cher department of central France, and gave the aid to affected families.

The heavy rains began in May and were the worst for a century and a half; they affected France, Germany and Austria and caused enormous flooding and serious damage. As the floodwaters began to recede, Tzu Chi volunteers in France began survey work. As the situation improved, then the volunteers began to visit the affected families and distribute emergency condolence funds.

During the flooding, Nils Aucante, a Frenchman who is a member of the U.S. headquarters of the foundation, was helping document the relief work after the disaster in Ecuador. After his work was completed there, he returned immediately to France and worked with the volunteers on how to do relief work.

After his return, he informed himself about the flooding situation and made contact with the mayors of two affected town, Romorantin and Salbris. He wished to co-operate with the town governments and provide the aid needed by the flood victims. Olivier Pavy, Mayor of Salbris, was in Paris for a meeting and went to the city's Tzu Chi branch to see the volunteers.

The Mayor arrived at 11.30 a.m. on June 15. He told the volunteers that Salbris was close to Romorantin and had a population of about 5,500. The flooding was the worst in a hundred years and the damage very severe, he said; about 600 families were affected.



At 7.00 a.m. on June 20, a team of eight volunteers set out and made the journey of two and a half hours to Salbris. The Mayor had provided a list of 33 families who needed emergency assistance. He has actively made contact with them. They decided that, on that evening at seven o'clock, they would hold a small gathering for the affected families.

After discussions with the town government, the volunteers decided to give emergency funds to the 33 families without homes; that was a total of 72 people of 53 adults and 19 children. The principle was to give 200 euros to each family of one-two people and an additional 100 for each extra person. The town government would provide the location.

Before the start of the distribution, the volunteers used the opportunity to visit the families. The first was the Guillons – husband and wife who live with their daughter. After the flooding, the house presented a scene of devastation. The daughter told the volunteers that, when her father

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returned to the house after the flood and saw its condition, he wept. Everything he saw had been destroyed, including all the family memorabilia; he could not find the words to describe the pain in his heart. The volunteers told the family: “we bring the sincere love and concern of Master Cheng Yen and the blessings of all the members of Tzu Chi.” They gave 300 euros to the Guillon family and wish them a return to their normal life as early as possible.

The second family visited by the volunteers was the Lecompte, with six members. The floods destroyed everything in their home and they cannot return.

The Mayor accompanied the volunteers in showing concern to the affected families. They gave encouragement and condolence and, in addition, 600 euros of emergency cash. They also brought a letter from Master Cheng Yen with her blessings. After Ms. Lecompte heard it, she said with gratitude: “This evening I shall certainly take part in the event in the town hall to share the love of Tzu Chi.”

During their family visits, the volunteers gave relief funds to 24 households. France’s Number Three television station, the Radio plus FM and three local newspapers all carried reports of the event. As a result, other towns and cities began to approach the Foundation and ask for help. The volunteers gradually made contact with neighboring towns and cities and hope to provide the aid needed by people and the sincerest blessings after these, the worst floods in France for 100 years.