

Volunteers in Taiwan Build Pre-fab Classrooms for Philippine

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation
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Tzu Chi volunteers in the central Taiwan city of Taichung are building 160 pre-fabricated classrooms to replace those destroyed in a civil war in Zamboanga. They are giving all their time and energy to this important mission, to enable the children of the city to return to school as soon as possible.

From September 9 to 28, the city of Zamboanga in the southern Philippines was devastated by the civil war. It left hundreds of people dead or wounded and forced 100,000 people to leave their homes. Many buildings were damaged, including more than 20,000 homes and dozens of schools. Tzu Chi volunteers in the Philippines immediately began the relief work by providing care and relief goods.

Master Cheng Yen also pays attention to education and regards it as a priority: the education of children cannot be delayed. The Philippine government asked the Foundation to provide 160 prefabricated classrooms. This mission was entrusted to the liaison office of Houli in Taichung as a matter of urgency, so that the children can return to school as soon as possible.



Each day more and more volunteers are coming to the Houli branch to take part in the work. On November 5, 250 of them were on the job: while they are not experts at assembly, they are patient and determined. They learn the job from the beginning, including elderly bodhisattvas in white hair and thin, frail women; they want to devote as much time as they can to complete their mission and make high-quality classrooms.

The branch has turned into a large steel factory. The 250 volunteers have brought iron tools and instruments. One of them, Yang Mai-po, wears a cloth to protect her hair. She said: "after doing the welding, this is entirely black. Here I must do the polishing and there the painting. Master Cheng Yen tells us that we must do the work professionally."

A group of four women are together in a team; each one is working quickly. Each is wearing protective glasses and face masks, so that it is hard to tell their ages. Only under their security helmet can you see strands of white hair. Lin Xue-e, 64, began by knowing nothing; now she has become an expert. She said: "we continue to work. At the beginning, we were unsure. The more you do, the more skilled you become. When a sister tells me to go back and paint, then I will do it."

One team of five people is to fix flaw items; they are discussing how to fix a component with a 0.2 centimeters off hole. Wearing presbyopic glasses, they look and look again to get it right; they work steadily to finish the job.

