

## Tzu Chi to Launch Work-for-food Program in Haiti, Sends Third Aid Shipment

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation  
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The Tzu Chi Foundation will on February 8 begin a relief work programme for residents of Port-au-Prince, giving them food in exchange for clearing up their devastated community. On February 4, its third major aid shipment, with enough food for 1.6 million meals, left its headquarters in Hualien.

It will launch the program in Tabarre, a district in the capital, paying those who take part the equivalent in food of US\$5 a day. It will make the first distribution of food on February 11. So far, more than 300 people have registered to take part in the work. The foundation used a similar program last October in Marikina, a suburb of Manila, which had been severely flooded by typhoon Ketsana. It was a great success; hundreds of residents signed up and were delighted to be paid to clean up their city and help in the reconstruction. It gave them not only a material reward but a sense of hope and respect. To prepare the program, volunteers visited Tabarre Mayor Jean Frantz Theodat. Since his office was damaged by the earthquake, Mr Theodat is working in a half-completed brick room with a cloth roof. At the request of the volunteers, he gave a detailed account of the situation in Tabarre. They introduced the foundation and its methods and gave red packets to him and his staff, as a sign of friendship and blessing.

The foundation is conducting the program with a local church, Impact for God, whose members are preparing a clean-up plan and a list of those who will receive the food. One of the church's pastors, Damas Destine, said that they were extremely happy and thankful to receive this help. "We are in such need now. Haiti has nothing – we need food and we need help," he said. The volunteers have proposed to the pastors a service of blessing on February 12, which marks the first month after the earthquake. Volunteer Zhang Jiduo said: "We want to use love to heal the wounds of the heart and use the power of religion to bring tranquility to people's souls." A Christian church and a Buddhist organization are working hand-in-hand; as they walk together, they take a step closer to the suffering people of Haiti.



On Wednesday afternoon, the foundation's third major shipment of aid for Haiti left its headquarters in Hualien. It consisted of 40 tonnes of instant rice and 30 tonnes of corn powder, sufficient to make 1.6 million meals. In addition, volunteers in Taipei provided two containers full of re-useable bowls, eating utensils and blankets. The goods will be loaded onto a vessel at the harbour of Keelung, north Taiwan, and should reach Haiti in mid-March. They will be part of the foundation's medium and long-term aid to Haiti.

The volunteers in Haiti also visited another area of Port-au-Prince – Fort Nationale, Delmas, home to a community of more than 5,000 people. They lost all their homes to the earthquake but no aid groups have set foot in the area. "The population here is experiencing a critical

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shortage of food,” said volunteer Zhang Xinghua. “They are desperate for food aid.” Every day, the residents form long queues for the supply of precious water; they can barely survive on what little they can get. They have been waiting three weeks for help to exhume their loved ones who are still trapped under the rubble; they have given up hope of finding them alive. What they see profoundly affects the volunteers and the other foreign aid workers. They will keep the residents of Fort Nationale in their prayers and come back to help them as soon as they can.