

## Tzu Chi Provides Food Aid to 500 Families in Guatemala During Covid-19 Pandemic

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation  
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In Guatemala in central America, the coronavirus pandemic has pushed to the brink many families who were already disadvantaged. Charity organizations cannot enter their villages, and villagers cannot leave to go to work.

Before the outbreak, a Priest Pbro. Luis Felipe Alonso Baeza of Parroquia Inmaculada Concepción de Villa Nueva, Guatemala, conducted a survey by sending out volunteer for home visits. Villa Nueva is the third largest city in the Department of Guatemala; it is 16 kilometers south of the national capital, Guatemala City. The volunteers discovered that nearly 10 percent of people were disadvantaged families in need of assistance. "Among the 1.05 million people, there are about 100,000 who need help," they reported.

After the coronavirus outbreak, church volunteers often went to villages. Once they saw a house hanging a white flag, in a plea for help. In the house was a mother of three; she was an assistant on a school bus who had lost her job due to the closure of the school.

The epidemic has made life even harder for those already struggling to make ends meet. The Church contacted the Tzu Chi Foundation via Mr. Oscar of "#Juntos502", a charity organization.

The Tzu Chi volunteers immediately responded to the request by purchasing needed materials. To pack the goods, 14 volunteers from the Church and the Foundation gathered at the home of Tzu Chi volunteer Chang Tzu-ren, a bright and airy space. Mr. Oscar provided face masks to keep everyone safe.



The volunteers prepared carefully each relief package. Besides including rice bran and other necessities, the volunteers put in cards of Master Cheng Yen's daily reminders and Jing Si Aphorisms -- they hope to bring positive energy to help people through these difficult times.

After the packaging, the goods were shipped by truck with a driver arranged by Mr. Oscar. At the site, Tzu Chi volunteers presented locally made cloth masks to everyone, and wished them good health.

The distribution site was in the area of Guatemala most severely infected by the virus. Because of this, the volunteers were not allowed to enter. Thus, on behalf of the Tzu Chi Foundation, Chang Tzu-ren donated the goods to the Church, for the Father and his fellow volunteers to deliver.

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They held the distribution for 502 households. Each family received bags of rice bran, rice, oatmeal, corn flour, milk powder, black beans, and sugar. While the Tzu Chi volunteers were unable to join the distribution, they reminded the local volunteers to use personal protection equipment properly.

Seeing the photos and words recorded by the local volunteers, the Tzu Chi volunteers felt very touched when they saw the smiles on the faces of recipients. Every package was full of love and blessings from Tzu Chi volunteers and everyone who cares around the world.