

## Tzu Chi Volunteers Provide Clean Water To Haiyan Survivors

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation

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November 30 was a special day for many residents of the central Philippine town of Tacloban, one of the worst affected by Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda). A total of 172 Tzu Chi volunteers from Taiwan, Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia arrived in the town, accompanied by Philippine volunteers and staff from Manila and Cebu.

They are part of the foundation's large and growing long-term relief work in Leyte province, of which Tacloban is the capital. The volunteers will conduct surveys of the disaster to ascertain the needs of the victims, medical missions and personally meet participants of the cash-for-work program. On one single day, the 11th of the program, 20,667 residents of the town took part.

November 30 was the first time volunteers have used new water-purifying machines that the foundation has developed in partnership with the Industrial Technology Research Institute in Taiwan. At the request of Master Cheng Yen, the founder of Tzu Chi, the volunteers brought three of these machines to Tacloban to provide clean drinking water for the typhoon victims. They are known as Q3 -- the three stand for quantity, quality, and quick (distillation).



The single portable machine can purify five tons of dirty water in a day using the state-of-the-art technology and benefiting 2,500 people; it takes less than an hour to complete the purification process.

According to Will Jen, one of the company's researchers, this is the first time that they have brought these heavy machines to a disaster site. His group did not think twice about carrying them all the way from Taiwan, once they learnt the conditions in which the Tacloban people were living.

"Once we landed here in Tacloban, we saw how different the situation is from Manila," he said. "In these conditions, people really don't have access to clean water. That is why we brought the distilling units here. Under normal circumstances, people really don't need to drink highly purified water. But the case of the typhoon victims is different. The disaster made the victims vulnerable to contaminated water that will eventually lead to contracting diseases. Thus we came here to ensure that what we will provide them with is clean and safe drinking water."



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This small but precious gift is something that Samuel Guillemer Sr. is thankful for. His community in Barangay 59-A is still without water, three weeks after the wrath of Haiyan devastated the town. He says that, in order to get water, they need to go to city hall; from there, they bring home containers they have filled, riding a motorcycle.

“Our water supply has been cut and, sometimes, the ration is not enough for all of us,” he said. “It is risky to transport containers filled with water while riding a motorcycle. We might get into an accident. That’s why we are thankful for Tzu Chi’s help (with this water supply). Now we don’t need to go far to get drinking water. “

He has also been a participant in the cash-for-work program for two weeks. Formerly, he worked at the Sto. Niño site and now works in their area in Barangay 59-A. “Instead of leaving this place, I told myself ‘why not help clean the community up?’ Tacloban will always be my home.” he said proudly.

The extent of the devastation has shocked the volunteers. One of them, Ng Chuan Lim from Singapore, said that, of all the countries he has visited in Asia, the damage caused by Haiyan is the worst he has seen. In 2004, he went to Sri Lanka after it was struck by the deadly tsunami.



“It is painful to see destruction everywhere.” he said. “That is why our Master Cheng Yen tells us that we must speed up efforts so that the lives of the victims can return to normal. The whole Tzu Chi global community is here to help.”

Tzu Chi Singapore is busy preparing for their Sutra adaptation that will be performed by 10,000 people on December 14 and 15. Lim is taking part in the adaptation; but, despite his busy schedule, Lim chose to come to the Philippines and help.

“After the Master agreed for us to come here, I know that this is a wonderful opportunity to help. And it was worth it, seeing that people here are smiling because Tzu Chi has done a lot to alleviate their suffering,” Lim added.