

Moved by Tzu Chi, Tacloban Survivors Become Volunteers

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation

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Residents of Tacloban, the town in the central Philippines devastated by Typhoon Haiyan, have joined the Tzu Chi Foundation as volunteers after taking part in their cash-for-work program. The residents are full of gratitude for how the foundation has helped them clean up their town.

Immediately after their arrival, the Tzu Chi volunteers started the “cash-for-work” program, on November 20; it gives a daily relief fund of 500 pesos to people to clean up their community. It is a way both to help bring the city back to normal and put badly needed cash into the pockets of the residents. It has given hope and strength to the typhoon survivors to rise again from the disaster; life at the disaster zone is slowly returning to normal. When interviewed, everyone thanked Tzu Chi for the help extended to them. Some wrote their gratitude on cardboards and placed them at the roadside for all to see.

At three o'clock in the afternoon, participants in Tzu Chi's “Cash-for-work Clean-up” Programme ended their work and walked towards Sampaguita Plaza. Two of the residents, Rhea, 33, and Dory, a 31-year-old teacher, decided to become volunteers after taking part in the program. Rhea, a survivor of the typhoon, made this decision after taking part for two days. “I thought I should help my people,” she said. “I don't mind if I don't get paid for doing this.”



Rhea's house, which was located along the seaside not far from Sampaguita Plaza in the center of the town, was totally demolished by the typhoon. She took a reporter to the place where her house once stood; she said that, when the typhoon struck, she and her children were trapped inside because the door was locked. When asked how they finally got out, she said: “I don't know, but I think God was with us; and, with my children's help, we managed to open the door.”

Rhea was thankful that all her family members are safe. After doing the clean-up for two days, she decided to become a volunteer. She said: “we don't know each other and yet you are helping us. I thought I should help my people. I don't mind if I don't get paid for doing this.”

Another resident with the same idea was 31-year old Dory, a teacher. When she learnt of Tzu Chi's “Cash-for-work” program, she signed up as volunteer and enjoyed her work very much. “My husband and I are very happy to volunteer,” she said. “My husband helps to register new volunteers.”

Rhea and Dory report for work every day. The only thought in their minds is to help their people to stand up again from the disaster. Dory said: “our streets are clean now. Residents who participated in the “cash-for-work” program declared Tzu Chi as the Hero of Tacloban.”

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With Tzu Chi's aid, survivors are helping to rebuild their lives. Photo: Tzu Chi

Survivors are helping to rebuild their lives. Photo: Tzu Chi