

Tzu Chi Volunteers Help Saola Survivors Clean and Cheer Up

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation
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Tzu Chi volunteers in central Taiwan moved quickly to help the victims of Typhoon Saola clean their flooded homes and provide hot food and condolence money. They brought spiritual comfort and support as well as material help.

The typhoon made landfall at Hualien county in east Taiwan at 3.20 a.m. on Thursday. It pounded the island for two days, leaving five people dead, two missing and 16 injured. The Central Emergency Operation Center estimated that more than 6,000 residents in 14 cities and counties were evacuated and electricity to 177,000 households cut at one point. The Taipingshan area of Yilan county had the highest rainfall on Thursday, 1,800 mm.

On Saturday, 100 volunteers from central Taiwan went to two areas that had been badly affected – Shalu District in Taichong and Caotun in Nantou – to give all the help they could; this included hot food, condolence money and assistance in cleaning their homes and communities. Many of the residents had received a severe shock during the flooding and were very moved to see the volunteers coming. When they went to homes on a road, they saw the residents cleaning their homes and streets; their faces were full of despair and anxiety. They clutched the hands of the volunteers, lowered their heads and wept. At the height of the typhoon, with the sea waters surging, the rain water could not flow into the sea; as a result, about 500 homes would flooded, causing very extensive damage.



Hong Huang Xiuyun is an 86-year-old grandmother who lives in Caotun. She said that, because she suffers from high blood pressure and heart disease, she normally uses a wheelchair to move around. In the early morning of August 2, her son took her to the hospital for a check-up. On their way home, they discovered that the road had been flooded and they had to stay in the house of a friend. “Today we came home to find that, although the water had receded, the house is full of mud. I thank the volunteers very much for coming to help and show their concern,” she said.

Ding Liqing, a volunteer from Caotun, specially brought her two daughters with her to join the clean-up. The elder one, Jian Xin-yi, is in her first year at the Zhongxing Middle School in Nantou. She said: “I hope that the victims can quickly recover from their difficulties and resume their normal life.” Her sister, Jian Ding-hui, a fourth grader, said: “helping other people is a very happy thing to do, because we feel very happy ourselves.”

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Letter prays for a world without disaster

The volunteers brought with them a letter with the blessings from Master Cheng Yen. They visited the home of Lin Jin-zhu in Shabi to show their concern. Lin said: "That day the water flooded in very quickly. The next day we had two similar floodings. The whole of Shabili, Jurenli, Fuxingli and Zhulinli were covered by water."



Typhoon Saolo dumped torrential rain all over Taiwan. The damage it brought made Master Cheng Yen very worried. In her letter to those who had suffered, she expressed the concern and blessings of Tzu Chi members around the world. She expressed the wish that everyone could recover from their injuries and have a peaceful life. She prayed that the water will drain as soon as possible, so that all those who have been affected can overcome their difficulties.

Concern among people is the most important

A typhoon makes the plight of those families in difficult financial situation even worse. On August 5, led by Dr. Lai Ning-sheng, superintendent of Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital, staff of the hospital went out to a home of the foundation's care recipient in the area to clean the large amount of water and waste left by the typhoon. Within two hours, they had made the rooms as clean as new. The hospital also bought a new bed for the family.



At 7.30 a.m., 50 members of staff and their family members gathered at the main gate of the hospital for the drive to the homes of the care recipients. Once they reached their destination, everyone divided up the work in an efficient way; some swept the ground and others cleaned the floors and washed the kitchen utensils. From the living room to the bedrooms and the kitchen, everything was cleaned and the rain water swept away. In the kitchens, rotting food was thrown away, along with cockroaches found in the refrigerators and other items that had become smelly with mold.

Dr Huang Guang-yong, director of the immunology and rheumatology department, had been planning to take his children swimming that day. Instead, he took part in a clean-up for the first time. In his work, with two layers of gloves, he knows well the pain of those stricken with rheumatism who cannot move the joints in their fingers and feel them becoming stiffer and stiffer. He worked in the kitchen of a house, removing the rubbish and cleaning the pots, pans and furniture; he was happy to have this opportunity to give. He was working in an environment different to that of the hospital; he had entered the house of someone who is poor and sick. He felt even more strongly that the most important is the love of one person for another.

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