

Foundation First Charity to Deliver Relief Cash in Japan

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation
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[First day of relief in Kamaishi](#)

From June 9-12, volunteers delivered cash, relief goods and a letter of support from Master Cheng Yen to thousands survivors of the earthquake and tsunami in Japan. Tzu Chi were the first charity to distribute money directly to those involved, who have not yet received funds from their government, even three months after the disaster. Japan's top-selling newspaper, Yomiuri Shimbun, reported the Tzu Chi operation.

On the morning of June 8, more than 110 volunteers, from Taiwan and Japan, rose at five in the morning, put on their blue and white uniforms and set off for the distribution sites in Iwate prefecture in northeast Japan. There were two places – Kamaishi and Rikuzentakata, both badly hit by the earthquake and tsunami.

On the morning of June 9, at the survivors management headquarters in Kamaishi, many people waited patiently under the hot sun for the distribution. The only sound was that of shoes walking on the ground; the volunteers marveled at the order and self-discipline of the Japanese people. Many thought that the money would be deposited into their bank account and only discovered at the site that Tzu Chi would give the funds directly to them. Many found it hard to believe and felt very comforted. Some plan to use the money toward building of a new home, while one old man said: "finally, I can buy sushi."



At the site, volunteer Chen Jin-fa introduced Tzu Chi to the recipients, using a local volunteer as his interpreter. He described the foundation's work and its fund-raising funds for Japan and prayed for blessings for all those affected. Then the volunteers performed a simple sign language performance, "Love and Concern", which brought tears to the eyes of many. The volunteers held their hands and embraced them, to show their warmth and care. Among those present were official of Japan's Ministry of Education and Tamaki Kimiyoshi, a member of Japan's Parliament who went to Hualien on May 19 to meet Master Cheng Yen and thank Tzu Chi's help previously. Hsieh Ching-kui, head of the foundation's Religious Culture & Humanitarian Aid Department, thanked Mr. Tamaki and the Japanese government for their support, which had made the distribution possible. Mr Tamaki was seeing a Tzu Chi distribution for the first time; he frequently praised the efficiency of the volunteers and them in person. He also took part in the sign language performance, as a way of showing her solidarity with his compatriots.

One of the main organizers of the event was Masafumi Kumagai, a department chief at the Rikuzentakata city hall. After the disaster, he played a very active role in raising money and seeking goods for the relief effort. With his effort, Tzu Chi could held the relief distributions on

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May 26 and 27 to eight places in the city. During those events, the foundation earned the trust of the city government and people, enabling it to organise the large-scale distributions in June.



Mr Masafumi himself was a victim of the disaster. But, since then, he has been so busy doing relief work that he has had no time to think of his own feelings or his own losses. On the day after the tsunami, he had nothing to eat. On the third day, he had a piece of mochi. Only on the fourth day was he able to eat rice. Only now has he had the time to think calmly. He was very moved by the work of the foundation: "I have never seen a group like Tzu Chi, that has returned so many times to the disaster area, " he said. When he received the relief cash from Mr Hsieh Ching-kui, he said that it came with the love of people all over the world. "On behalf of all the people of Rikuzentakata, I express my thanks to Tzu Chi," he said.

During the distribution, each volunteer ate only instant rice and often took their meals in the car. They all cherished this opportunity to make a contribution to Japan.