

Haiyan Children Resume Studies in Tzu Chi Classrooms

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation

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With gratitude in their hearts and songs on their lips, the children of Typhoon Haiyan in the central Philippines have resumed their studies – thanks to prefabricated classrooms provided by the Tzu Chi Foundation. One month since the typhoon devastated the country, volunteers of the foundation are already able to see the results of their aid – the provision of medical care and the distribution of drinking water as well as the resumption of classes.

The impact of the typhoon was heaviest in Leyte province, where the cities of Tacloban, Omroc and Tunga were hit by winds exceeding 350 kilometers per hour. The Tunga Central School was severely damaged: of its 36 classrooms, 28 became unusable and all 1,080 students had to stop class. The children of its primary school had to come in with umbrellas, to protect themselves from the rain and the sun.



After discussions with the school staff, the volunteers decide to provide nine pre-fabricated classrooms. It took several days to assemble them, in order to give the students a better environment. The volunteers shared the work with local people who had joined a cash-for-work program the foundation launched to clean up their community. On December 5, while they were doing this work, the students came with cloth and brushes to clean the tables they would use in their classrooms. Since the area is still short of water and electricity, the students used with great care the water they had from plastic bottles to do the cleaning.

At three o'clock in the afternoon, under a cloudless sky, volunteers put into place the first classroom on the green earth. They then cleaned it. Not far away, 60 students were singing to show the joy in their hearts. They walked in and entered the classroom, carrying with them the tables which they had wiped clean.



When these images were sent back to Taiwan, Master Cheng Yen was very grateful. She said: "We see the children now have a classroom to study in. Though the classrooms are temporary, they at least provide a place for them to learn, broaden their mind, and gives them hope. Education is what brings hope to their future. This also teachers resume their teaching. From all this, we witness the power of living bodhisattvas' spiritual rices---the love that makes their hearts rich."

In addition to education, the volunteers have provided three water-filtering machines. They have

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been installed at Leyte Progressive High School, Saint Nunu Parish Church and Sampaguita Plaza; each day they can provide 15 tons of drinking water. The typhoon victims have put up posters expressing their thanks to Tzu Chi.

The foundation is also providing specialist medical care. Doctors from Tzu Chi hospitals and the members of Tzu Chi International Medical Association (TIMA) are taking turns to conduct free clinics. Before each opens, there is a long queue of patients. Some have flu and external wounds and others require emergency treatment.



Several days ago, a one-year-old baby Jhyra, was suffering from a spasm. A TIMA doctor gave her immediate attention and now her condition has stabilized. Her mother said: “Master Cheng Yen, I want to express my deepest gratitude for helping our family. You are providing so much help to us. Thank you.”

Love is being spread all over Tacloban through education and medical care.

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