

Volunteers Deliver Supplies to Earthquake Survivors in Christchurch

Written by
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Tzu Chi volunteers made a second delivery of relief supplies to victims of the devastating earthquake in Christchurch, in New Zealand. They were received with gratitude and tears by people still living in the stricken area.

The quake, registering 6.3 on the Richter scale, struck the city, in the South Island, on February 22, killing more than 180 people; it was the second deadliest natural disaster in the country's history. It caused damage of more than US\$12 billion and about 10,000 buildings will have to be demolished.

In December and January, Tzu Chi volunteers in New Zealand, who was based in Auckland at the northern tip of the country, were busy helping the victims of severe floods in Australia. After the earthquake, they contacted the local authorities to see how they could bring relief supplies to the disaster area, as well as comfort and care to the survivors. After much effort, they were able to make their first distribution on March 12, in co-operation with the Salvation Army, in one of the worst affected areas.

The sincere love and respect displayed by Tzu Chi volunteers deeply touched the residents. After the distribution, the volunteers learnt from local people that two other devastated areas, Bexley and New Brighton, also needed help. So, on March 14, the volunteers went with the Salvation Army to visit these two areas, both suburbs of the city. Originally, they were home to nearly 3,000 families; but, after the earthquake, many houses were damaged and those unable to rebuild left to stay elsewhere with friends or family. Now only about 500 families live there, most of them low-income households. When the volunteers went to visit them, some were so moved that they burst into tears.



They held the distribution for the 500 families on March 26 and 27, together with overseas Chinese residents and the Salvation Army. They heard first-hand accounts of the terror of the earthquake. A pair of sisters, aged nine and five, said that a good friend who lived next door had been crushed to death by falling glass. "There was a great deal of mud and slurry and our fellow students were running everywhere in panic," said the elder one. "Ever since, my younger sister has insisted that Mother be with her all the time. What hope is there for us? I wish that we will never see an earthquake again." An elderly woman had seen her house severely damaged and received no help at all for 12 days; she was close to breaking point. As she was queuing for her goods, she was embraced by one of the volunteers and burst into tears. During the prayers, she clasped her hands tightly and recited the words; the love and respect which Tzu Chi had shown her new hope for her life. She said with a smile: "I hope that tomorrow I can laugh again." Another resident said that they were very happy and most grateful to this Buddhist group: "you

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have brought the blessings of the world. Everyone here can feel your love and selfless giving. We are truly so very grateful.” The volunteers called on everyone to pray for the people of Japan. Having been through an earthquake themselves, they could understand the suffering that the Japanese are going through.

The people of Christchurch live in one of the most beautiful places on earth, but even they cannot escape from disaster. The earthquake has made them realize how impermanent life is. And it is not only there, but also in Japan and ten southern districts of Thailand which have been struck with torrential rain. The volunteers in that country have held emergency meetings to decide how to help. As [Master Cheng Yen](#) described it: “human life is full of suffering. We must all seize the opportunity and invite all of us to work hard and show compassion to everyone on the planet and make a contribution.”

※ [Tzu Chi Makes First Relief Distribution in Quake-hit Christchurch](#)