

Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation Disaster Response in Haiti

8/27/2021

After the earthquake in 2010, Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation USA (BTCF), or Tzu Chi, has, to date, been implementing disaster relief, response, and recovery programs, providing humanitarian aid and assistance, as well as implementing development programs in education, health, WASH, food security, and economic, and community development. These programs, this footprint in various communities throughout Haiti, has played a major role in preparing and accelerate the organization's response after the August 14, 2021 earthquake, which struck southwestern Haiti, roughly 78 miles or 125 km west of the capital, Port-au-Prince. The earthquake caused many water passages to be blocked and displaced residents from their homes, many moving into other households out of fear of building collapse. Further exacerbating the effects of the disaster, Tropical Storm Grace made landfall in Haiti two days later, August 16, bringing mudslides and complicating rescue efforts.

BTCF began developing its response immediately, assembling medical kits on August 20, sending a needs assessment team on the 21st, participating and contributing in various responder meetings in networks such as InterAction and NVOAD to share and gather information. Similar to other responders, BTCF's assessment team found that the most immediate needs were shelter, water, food, medical, and psychosocial support.

Assessment teams were in De Mapou in the commune of Les Cayes, Haiti, to visit the Catholic school, Sœurs Salésiennes, and, later met with Les Cayes Mayor Marie Michelle Sylvie Rameau, assessing sites that were damaged, scouting areas, including a local factory to host upcoming distributions.

“With our eyes, we saw the damage last week's earthquake had done to the building; with our ears, we listened to the events that unfolded that day; with our hearts, we felt the Sisters' pain.”

In addition to medical kits, BTCF is also preparing food items, water purification tablets, eco-blankets, and multi-purpose beds. The first round of food packages, which will support 5,000 households for 4 weeks in Les Cayes and Jeremie (BTCF is also in discussion to provide aid in Camp-Perrin as well), and will include the following food items: 62,500 kg of rice, 25,000 kg of shredded corn, 2,500 gallons of cooking oil, 120,000 bags of spaghetti, 100,000 bags of macaroni, 25m,000 kg of bean, all in addition to the medical kits, water purification tablets, eco-blankets, and multi-purposes beds.