

Colombo, Sri Lanka

August 16~17, 2014

**Led by local volunteers,
contributed by doctors
from two countries**

**Article by Tsui-Lien Lin, Chun-May Lee,
and Fu-Shun Huang**

August 16, 2014, Tzu Chi held a free medical clinic for the first time in the city of Kasbe, headquarters of Tzu Chi at Colombo, Sri Lanka. It was also the

first time a free clinic was led by local volunteers. The medical group from Singapore, together with the support of doctors from Sri Lanka, obtained temporary medical practice licenses for the event. To prepare for the clinic, volunteers conducted cleaning and set-up arrangement. When procuring medical supplies, volunteers met with the largest dental equipment and materials supplier Mr. Shi-Jong Lu, a third generation Chinese in Sri Lanka. When he realized the purpose, he voluntarily gave us a substantial discount on the merchandise.



Dr. Fong Poh Hin came from Singapore examining Rev. Wimalatissa who came from 300 kilometers away.



Executives bowed 90 degrees, delivering eyeglasses with great respect.

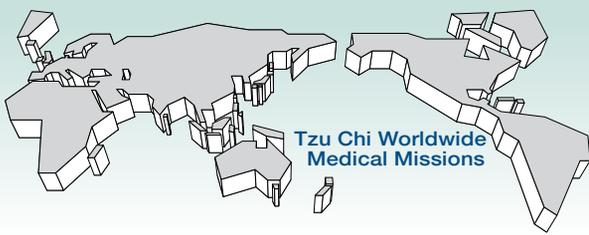
Help from the Singapore's Medical Group

Nanasa Community Centre, the headquarters of Kesbewa's development center, mobilized more than 10 volunteers to clean-up the area on August 12. When the team made-up by medical personnel, business executives, and volunteers, arrived on August 15, they started organizing the facility with local volunteers. There was only one faucet for water supply, thus it required sufficient water pressure for the dental equipment. Since electrical outages are frequent in Sri

Lanka, we rented generators as standby. Volunteers from Singapore with experience were helping to install the generators.

"We represent Dharma Master Cheng Yen, if she was here, how would she show her love to the locals? Although the space is limited, we must make them feel comfortable when staging the area," Dr. Fong Poh Him told the team.

"Good day, we are from the Tzu Chi Foundation, we would like to invite everyone to come to our free clinic at the community center. We have professional doctors and dentists from Singapore to serve us," said local volunteer Rananjaya who spent two hours riding a tricycle with



Dr. Gee from Singapore came downstairs to treat patients who have difficulty climbing stairs.

microphone circling the 15 kilometers community. He broadcasted the event to local residents returning from work. Arosa, the person in charge from Sri Lanka and other local volunteers stayed in the area overnight to ensure a smooth operation.

Doctors Showed a Warm Welcome to Buddhist Masters from Far Away

Kesbewa is a city with dense houses and narrow streets, and a lack of convenient transportation. Tzu Chi chose this location, so local residents could walk or use buses provided by Tzu Chi.

In the waiting area, volunteers Kumala introduced the Tzu Chi's bamboo bank spirit and Tzu Chi's footprint on providing charitable work.

People came today were mostly local residents. However, 35 years old Rev. Wimalatissa is a Buddhist master who came from Ampara, about 300 kilometers away. He was referred to Tzu Chi by a local neurologist. He rode a motor tricycle the night before and arrived this early morning to seek Dr. Fong Poh Him's help. The medical report was transmitted immediately to Neurologists in Singapore. The second morning, a diagnosis came back from Singapore, which agreed with

the recommendation of the local doctors, meaning a surgery for a blood vessel in his brain. Rev. Wimalatissa felt this long trip was worthwhile, especially the great service he received from free clinic.

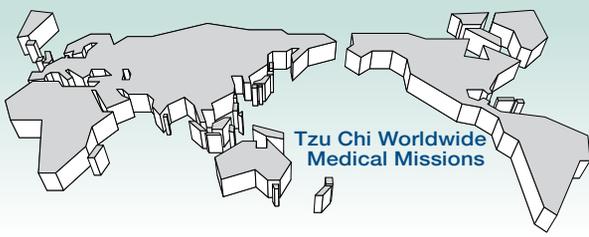
Mr. Narasinger, 61 years old, could not walk without help after a stroke 8 years ago. Therefore, Dr. Gee came down from the second floor to examine him. Because the recovery of the patient's legs muscles was good, Dr. Gee encouraged him to continue exercising, and avoid falling. Mr. Narasinger also appreciated the medication and care, both of which are

expensive in Sri Lanka.

Seliyendi who had polio came for help. After reviewing her medical record and x-ray films, Dr. Se-Yi Lee and Dr. Gee found out her cane was too short which caused the sores of the shoulder and numbness of the hands. Doctors showed her how to exercise the legs, strengthen the muscle and relief the pain of the knees. They also recommended her to wear shoes to walk. The case was transferred to Columbo's social worker to continue care for her needs as well as finding a suitable cane.



The medical team not only provided medical treatment, but also brought joy to children using balloons that can be shaped and folded into animals.



Dr. Deng Guorong, Singapore TIMA, was comforting those with disability, singing and dancing.

The Joy of Seeing Light Again

At 3 pm in the afternoon, a distribution of eyeglasses took place. The marketing manager of a local optometrist, Mr. Nilaksha, and his coworkers were also present to help adjusting the glasses for patents. Jerome Kingston, who had participated at several free clinics before,

was responsible for distributing the glasses. When he saw how happy the locals were when they put on the glasses, all that effort was very worthwhile.

34 years old Lamuyalatan was near-sighted with 1,400 degrees vision and could not afford five thousands rupee (equivalent to 5000 NT) so she gave up on glasses. She has five children, but cannot help her children to read and write

because of her vision. After receiving the glasses, she can see clearly. She really appreciated Tzu Chi's help. In total, this clinic benefited 500 people and distributed 159 pairs of eyeglasses.

Bring the Medical Treatment to the Sick Bed

Victoria Hospital for the Disabled and Handicapped, people had many visitors today. They also brought many new medical treatments, care and warmth to the hospital. This is the first time in 100 years that medical volunteers from foreign countries came to help free clinic.

Since 2011, Columbo's Tzu Chi volunteers have come on Poya Day every month. The free clinic started in May of this year after volunteers from Singapore visited Sri Lanka and discussed with 84 years old Superintendent of the hospital, Dr. Thawarap Peruma, the need of medical service. Although there are nurses on duty in the hospital, there are no real medical services, especially in the dental area. After yesterday's local community free clinic, the medical team came here to help provide services like dental, internal medicine, Chinese medicine including Acupuncture. They also provided eye exam and glasses.

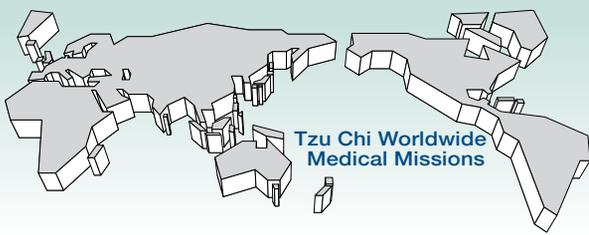
Because there was not much room in the hospital, not all doctors could provide service. Therefore, the medical

team was divided into two different teams; one team would provide services for those who could move by themselves and the other team would bring all the medical instruments to the ward for those who were bedridden. The local volunteers would act as translators to help communicate.

"This tooth is pretty loose, however don't worry, I can take it out easily," Dr. Deng Guorong was consoling a patient who was afraid of a tooth-extraction. It was unprecedented to bring dental service to the bedside and for those who had never seen a dentist it can be a nervous experience. Dr. Deng started singing the Indian song and dancing. Patient relaxed and the dental treatment was completed in a short two minutes.

With bandage on his right arm, Dr. Yuen-Hsu Lin was wearing a headlight and concentrating on checking patients in the dental examination room. Two weeks ago, he broke his right wrist. Dr. Lin commented with the joy of helping others, "Now I can't clean or extract the teeth, but I can still use my left hand to do examinations to ease the burden on other dentists."

Led by the head nurse, internists Dr. Gee and Dr. Lee came to the wards of the hospital. Most of the patients here could not speak and required special care from others for daily chores. Doctors would have to bend to ask how they were and



noticed some of the wounds or diseases of the skin. They also found out their blood sugar levels were too low for many. Doctors would give those candies and remind the hospital staff to adjust the medicine as needed.

Chinese Acupuncture Well Received and Patients Regain Their Vision

53 years old Padma had polio when she was young, thus resulted the immobility of her two legs. She relied

on wheelchair for daily living and still maintained her independence. She washed and dried her own clothes every day. After a long period, her arms were injured and she had difficulty lifting them

The recommendation of the internist was Chinese Medicine. Dr. Lee-Fong Lin carefully examined her and administered acupuncture as well as massage. She was able to lift her arms. She smiled and now the pain that troubled her for 6 months had gone. "I can wash and dry my own clothes now, thanks," Padma happily said.



Dr. Yuen-She Lin with a broken right arm was examining a patient's teeth with professionalism.



The executives were shaving those who are bedridden. They spent over half an hour and sweating.

Executives Touched at Bathing Patients

The executives from Singapore had a special mission today, which was to bath patients with disabilities. It is also called “Bathing the Buddha.” Led by local volunteers, eight strong men cleaned and washed handicapped patients for the first time in their life.

“When I shaved his beard, I saw tears in his eyes, and I felt so,” Kuo-Chuan Lin choked with tears, “I was holding back my tears, because we can’t show our pain

to patients. Normally, I use 3 to 5 minutes to shave, but I used half-an-hour and sweating.”

The CEO of a transnational enterprise Kuo-Chuan Lin shared his feeling after bathing a patient.

The free clinic ended successfully by 3pm in the afternoon, it provided services to 107 patients for internal medicine, 80 patients for dental care, 13 for Chinese medicine, and 62 pairs of eyeglasses. “You are marvelous today! Thank you for all your services and I hope you will come again,” the head of the hospital expressed his gratitude.