

Promoting Tzu Chi Spirit in Phnom Penh

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation
Monday, 05 September 2011 16:49



From 20 to 22 Aug, the CEO of Tzu Chi Singapore Branch, David Liu and his team of Tzu Chi volunteers from Singapore conducted home visits in Phnom Penh with the local Tzu Chi volunteers. This was the second time the Singapore delegation visited Cambodia, one and a half months after their first visit in July to conduct the Blissful Life seminar.

The month of August is the monsoon season of Cambodia, but it doesn't rain as much this year compared with the previous years. The temperature reaches 34 degrees Celsius in the afternoon; accompanied by high humidity, the heat is unbearable and one is soaked to the skin.

The traffic is heavy during weekend in Phnom Penh. Apart from commercial and private cars, there are many motorcycles on the road. The motorcyclists swerve among the cars, though making the traffic messy, do not put themselves in danger as all drivers are seemingly courteous.

Shops at the roadsides are also bustling with business. Many hardware shops display all sorts of machines and motors for sale while street vendors line the street selling basic daily necessities. There is no doubt that Phnom Penh is bustling with life.

Prior to the arrival of the Singapore delegation, volunteer Yoshikazu Shaku and Keng Lim had arrived earlier on 17 Aug to conduct home visits with the local volunteers and do the necessary groundwork in preparation for the arrival of the Singapore delegation which comprised volunteers from the Entrepreneur Group, Medical Group, Home Visit Team and Documenting Team.

The Singapore delegation stayed at the same hotel, New York Hotel, that they stayed during their previous visit in July. Shortly after the delegation had checked into the hotel and settled down, they met up with local volunteers and in two minibus they went to visit two new care recipients and an old one in the First Village in Chroy Chongva District.



The local volunteers participating in the home visits were very enthusiastic, among the 18 of them were some new volunteers, such as Dr Nguon Peng, two medical students in their final year of studies, Phan Monirath, Mey Sok Kalyan and Sok Kheng.

After the home visits, upon arrival at the hotel at 4 pm, a meeting was conducted to discuss about the progress of the existing cases, the qualifying conditions for assistance for new cases, and the problems encountered during home visits as well as other queries.

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Before the meeting started, Liu mentioned that as it was a formal meeting, proper meeting ritual needs to be followed. He demonstrated the three bows to the Buddha and Master Cheng Yen and then led the rest to perform the ritual.

Charitable work to take root locally

"At Tzu Chi, we make decisions after reaching consensus in meeting discussions; no individual makes decisions for the rest." Liu highlighted the purpose of meetings and their significance.

One of the philosophies of Tzu Chi's charity mission is to extend help to people in one's proximity. Taking into account of traffic conditions and travel time, Liu conveyed that Master Cheng Yen doesn't encourage volunteers to travel far to look for needy cases.

Citing Sri Lanka as an example, Liu pointed out that Tzu Chi only covers area accessible within half an hour by car. As for the seaside town of Hambantota which spans a bigger area, the limit is extended to not more than one hour by car.

"Considering that most our local volunteers are salarymen who do not have much free time at their disposal and transportation to the suburbs is not convenient, it would be fairly taxing for us to provide long-term support to needy people who live half an hour away by car. Therefore, it is best that we start from our own immediate community and conduct charity work locally in Phnom Penh," advised Liu.



Exercising both compassion and wisdom to achieve perfection

In Chroy Chongva District in east Phnom Penh sits an abandoned four-storey building known as the First Village. The building, which used to be a French hospital, still looks sturdy. The staircases are at the two sides of the building and there are many partitioned "homes" of different sizes at both sides of the central corridors. These partitioned spaces could have been wards and treatment rooms in the past. The walls and floors are in very bad shape as they have not been maintained for long and the walls are badly stained and are turning black and yellow. But one can still get a peep of the glorious past of the building from the beautiful floor tiles and the classic and elegant iron railings of the staircases.

In the 90s after the civil war had ended, many people moved to Phnom Penh and squatted at the building on a 'first come first serve' basis. The building is now fully occupied by more than 300 very poor households from all sorts of backgrounds and, with the leads from their neighbours, more than 10 of them are now care recipients of Tzu Chi.

According to one volunteer, a care recipient feels that he is not treated fairly in the amount of cash aid he receives and is bothered by it. The volunteer sought advice from Liu on how to handle such a situation.

Liu opined, "It is very difficult to identify the poorer from the many poor there. If there are still

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many who have difficulties in leading their lives, we can extend our help to them too. But if we do not do our job perfectly, it will lead to misunderstanding and a sense of unfairness among our beneficiaries."

As such, Liu suggested that the local volunteers get in touch with the village head, Mdm Pernpov, and obtain income statistics of the village residents to understand their situation better. After which, the volunteers will have to visit each household to understand and verify its plight in detail. With the information gathered, the committee will discuss how to help the needy in the best manner.

Recruiting "Bodhisattvas" to spread the spirit of Tzu Chi



Tzu Chi's tenet has long been to inspire the rich to help the poor and to guide the poor to strive for spiritual wealth. Such long-term endeavour however requires more than just volunteer manpower to accomplish.

Citing the examples of the disaster relief in Haiti and Japan, Liu explained that the relief funds were raised by both Tzu Chi volunteers and members who took to the streets to solicit donations. "We encourage our volunteers to also sign up as donating members as participating in home visits allows us to form good affinities with the poor whereas by being a donor (and with Tzu Chi's missions benefiting the society at large), we create good affinities with the mass. Those who form wholesome affinities with people are the blessed ones."

Liu then encouraged all to fill out the membership application form to become volunteers and members of Tzu Chi. "We are glad to have you bodhisattvas here with us. Feel free to donate whatever amounts you are comfortable with. With the money collected and with the recruitment of even more people to be members through you in future, we can then help the needy together."

He hopes that fresh volunteers in Cambodia will "learn along the way by asking more questions and be diligent, exercising both their compassion and wisdom" in their lives. "Such is the Tzu Chi's way of practicing Buddhism," he concluded.

With the encouragement of Liu, the response was overwhelming. 23 people signed up as members and volunteers, hoping to become "the blessed ones" who exercise both their compassion and wisdom.

One of them is Phai Cham, a receptionist at the side hall counter of the hotel. The side hall was where the meetings between volunteers from Singapore and Cambodia were held. Overhearing all the meetings from beginning to end, Phai Cham was very touched by what she heard and came forward to enquire about signing up as a Tzu Chi member.

"I really admire all of you being so committed to helping the poor; due to my job I can't afford the

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time to be a volunteer, but I am very willing to help by becoming a member and make donation."

In September 1994, heavy rains caused a national disaster in Cambodia and Tzu Chi was soon in Cambodia to conduct disaster relief after the Cambodian government appealed to the international community for help. Among the relief materials were rice, grain seeds, as well as water pumps and fuel for irrigation, in the hope of improving the living conditions of the Cambodians. However, a civil war ensued and Tzu Chi's relief efforts which had lasted for three years were brought to a halt abruptly.

"After an absence of 14 years, we are finally back in Cambodia, and all of you are our pioneer volunteers and members." Brother concluded the visit to Cambodia by sending his sincerest encouragement and well wishes to the Cambodians.

By Lim Chwee Lian
Translated by Dr Ong Eng Hong

Однако все случилось намного " [Скачать аську для нокии c5](#) " раньше, чем планировал Рабинович.

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"лесов, скрывающих "
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"горизонт.

Незачем было спрашивать, по какому " [100 книг обязательных к прочтению](#) "д
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