

## TIMA Treats 1,900 Patients in Sri Lanka

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation  
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A team of 130 volunteers from Malaysia and Singapore held a free three-day clinic in a remote mountain town in Sri Lanka, treating 1,882 patients. It was the first foreign medical team ever to visit the town.

The mission, by the [Tzu Chi International Medical Association](#) (TIMA), was organized by the Singapore chapter; it was its third large-scale clinic in Sri Lanka after ones in August 2009 and March this year. The team, of doctors, nurses and volunteers, came from Singapore and Malaysia; all covered their own travel and accommodation expenses. They flew from Singapore to Colombo, the capital of Sri Lanka, and then took a two-hour bus ride to Karawanella, a town in the mountains. They received a very warm welcome from the town hospital, as the first foreign medical team ever to visit the town. Such free treatment is rare in a country where medical care is expensive and beyond the means of the average person. Among the patients was a woman who left her burns untreated for 15 years and a mother and son who suffered from the same form of fibroid tumor.

Many others had cataracts and left them untreated because they could not afford the simple surgery. The team used the facilities of the local hospital and brought some of their own equipment; because most of the patients did not speak English, the team arranged interpreters from among the local population.



The TIMA members wore the association's black and white uniform. The patients, with a wide variety of illnesses, packed the waiting area. One boy had a large tumor on his upper lip, which disfigured his face; his mother also had fibroid tumors disfiguring her face. A 49-year-old woman had severe burns on her neck; she was burned many years ago but could not afford to have the wounds properly treated. As a result, her neck muscles were damaged, which prevented her from turning her head ever since. After examining her, the TIMA team decided to do a skin graft. "Her neck muscles contracted, so she could not lift her head," said one volunteer. "We cut open the wound and added more skin to her neck, so that she can move her neck and head now." Even while she was recovering from the pain of the procedure, she insisted on personally thanking the doctors. "I want to thank all the Tzu Chi volunteers, the doctors and the nurses," she said. "The doctors looked after me as if they were my parents. I just want to thank everyone here."

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using the same principles as the ones used in the design of the program, the foundation is now able to