

With Master Cheng Yen's blessing, South African to Walk Farther and Longer

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On November 20, Master Cheng Yen certified five new commissioners from South Africa. They will spread the Great Love of Tzu Chi in their country and help the foundation to care for more than 1,800 AIDS patients and provide three meals a day to over 5,500 orphans whose parents have died of AIDS.

No country in the world has suffered more from the tragedy of AIDS. In 2010, more than one tenth of South African people carried HIV and an average of 1,000 people died from HIV-related diseases every day. Kai-Di, a Chinese writer who used to reside in South Africa, described the situation in this way: "AIDS is not only a misfortune of South Africa, but also a daily routine." So looking after AIDS patients and the orphans has become a priority for the Zulu volunteers in Durban. They began this work in 2000, starting in their own villages and expanding to neighboring tribes, in the search for patients in need. They are currently taking care of more than 1,800. The Zulu volunteers say: "the patients during their last phase cannot move easily or take care of themselves, so we clean their bodies and massage them to keep the blood flowing. As for patients who are still able to move around, we give them confidence and encouragement to help them find dignity and light for their lives. "

Another priority are AIDS orphans, of whom there were about two million in the country as of 2010. Through caring for the AIDS patients, the volunteers have gained an understanding of the importance and seriousness of the plight of the orphans. Therefore they proposed a plan to raise and feed them. They began by buying vegetable shoots and cultivating 120 'Farms of Love' in Durban, to grow nutritious food for the orphans. Currently, the Durban volunteers are feeding more than 5,500 orphans. They search houses, one by one, to find needy children; the number of the children who benefit is increasing every day.



Tzu Chi volunteer Pan Ming-Sui says that he came to South Africa for business 22 years ago. At that time, Taiwan sent a shipment of clothes to be distributed as relief aid. In order to give these to the poorest people, he entered the community and, since then, has been interacting with the Zulu women. From distribution of relief aid to occupation training, he has helped the women learn a skill to survive on their own. In 2000, this group of women transformed themselves from being helped to volunteers who helped others and started to care for the AIDS patients and the orphans.

Gladys Ngema, a Zulu who has been a volunteer for 11 years and was certified as a Tzu Chi commissioner in 2006, said that Master Cheng Yen has brought them tremendous force and encouraged them to walk farther and longer.