

Tzu Chi Held Free Eye Clinic in Bali, Indonesia

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation
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The Indonesian island of Bali is famous around the world as a tourist destination. It offers not only beautiful scenery but a wealth of cultures: in a country that is majority Muslim, most of its people are Hindu. So it attracts thousands of visitors, from home as well as abroad.

But, behind the beauty and music of the island, visitors can see many poor people. Its system of medical insurance only covers those who have a Bali identity card; it excludes those who have come from other places to work as well as their families. They cannot obtain the same treatment as those with the ID card. Many families were poor as a result of sickness.

Those from abroad bring Great Love

Tzu Chi volunteers have been serving on Bali for 10 years and hope to reach more people who need help. On December 21 and 22, members of the Tzu Chi International Medical Association, in co-operation with the Bali police, held their first free eye clinic on the island; the venue was the Rumah Sakit Bhayangkara police hospital. They treated a total of 51 patients – 35 suffered from cataracts, 15 from pterygium and one from a dropping of the eyelash.



Lin Li-ou was the volunteer who planned the event. He was happy to say: “in our hearts, we feel deep gratitude that we were able to share the great love of Tzu Chi with the islanders. Compared to other parts of Indonesia, Bali has less patients visiting hospital for medical treatments.” One reason for this is the attitude of Balinese toward sickness. Many consider it ‘the natural law’ or even ‘the will of God’; they give thanks for being ill and consider it natural and do not need to visit the doctor. Perhaps because of this, more Balinese chose to visit faith healers rather than normal doctors.

The clinic received the support of the society and many departments of the government, especially the police. It provided two operation rooms of its Rumah Sakit Bhayangkara hospital and the use of other medical facilities. In addition, youth members of the Vihara Buddha Dharma came to take part in trial activities on December 14 and 15; they wanted to help the volunteers in preparing the clinic. Volunteer Lin expressed his gratitude, saying: “although they did not have much understanding of Tzu Chi, they wanted to take part in charity. I believe that, through their participation, they will experience a happiness they have never known before. I hope that everyone can continue in the same enthusiastic way, to enable Tzu Chi activities to go on.”

KBR Dr Felix Sangkalia, MS, a doctor in the teaching department of the hospital, said: “this clinic was extremely good, because people gave of themselves and provided a free service to

society. It will have a positive impact on our society. We certainly support it and hope that they can come every year.”



Old lady returns home with new warmth

The patients were sitting on the second floor of the hospital, waiting their turn to enter the operating room. One was Ni, aged 75; she had her blood pressure taken on the first floor. She did not know why the nurse keep taking her blood pressure again and again.

It turned out that the old lady was very nervous. Each time she had her blood measured, it was an alarming figure. So she needed a long time to calm down. Each time someone asked her if she was nervous, she would show her shining white teeth and say with a smile: “I am not nervous. I am not afraid of the operation, because I want to restore my eyesight.” But her blood pressure would reach a high of 170 and a low of 110.

The volunteers tried to think of ways to calm her. They said: “now we will sing a song together.” When they sang, Grandmother Ni gave a little smile but seemed too shy to sing herself. So this method did not work. So the volunteers tried another way: “we will go outside for a little talk, ok?” They stood on either side of her, held her hand and took her into the garden outside the hospital, talking and laughing with her.

The old lady lives on her own. She was very happy to have ‘family members’ going with her for a walk. This made her feel content. At least, through the patient attention of the volunteers, she was able to calm down and finally have the operation successfully.



Sight restored, a bright smile returns

Grandma Ni lives alone in Panti Sosial Tresna Werdha Welfare Home. In fact, she does not wish to live there; but her husband has passed away and her only daughter never came back after married. At her age, what choice does she have? She was suffering from cataracts for many years; all she could do was endure on her own. She has suffered for so long that she gave up hope.

“I cannot see my own children,” she said. These were her words five years ago to I Wayan Suanta, a security guard at the home; they are etched on his memory. “Every time there are visitors,” he said. “All the residents go out. So, even if the visitors are not family, they will come out. Even if they do not know the visitors, they feel very happy, because they have a sense of being wanted.” What the old people need is not material assistance but the warmth of a family

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and the embrace and concern of those who love them.

The return of Grandma's blood pressure to normal was the result of the love and laughter of the Tzu Chi volunteers. This enabled her to have the operation successfully. One day after, she returned to the hospital for a check-up. Her old smile had returned to her face; it was much brighter than a day before. When the volunteers asked if she was in pain, she replied that she felt no pain at all. The operation had gone smoothly; this was the best possible news and everyone was happy. They hope that Grandma Ni can now see the beauty of the world with her two eyes and keep smiling for ever.

This clinic brought hope and light to many people. Even more important, it brought a feeling of family warmth that cannot be bought by money. The first such clinic organized by the Bali branch ended successfully. Everyone hopes that the next one can go smoothly also and bring the spirit of Tzu Chi to even more people in Bali.

Report by Metta Wulandari in Indonesia
Translated to Chinese by You Yong-xing
Translated to English by Mark O'Neil