

## Gambian Vice President Impressed by Volunteer Spirits

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation

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In a visit to Hualien, the Vice President of the Gambia praised the work of the Tzu Chi Foundation and called for more people to follow its example and help the poor and needy in the world. During an official visit to Taiwan, Isatou Njie-Saidy came to Hualien on November 6 with a party of 11 people, including her country's ambassador to Taiwan.

The Gambia is the smallest country in mainland Africa, with a land area of 10,500 square kilometers north and south of the Gambia river in west Africa. Of the population, 90 per cent are Muslims.

The vice-president and her party were shown round the Jing Si Hall, which contains an exhibition showing the history and global activities of the foundation. Her guide explained that, while it is a Buddhist organization, Tzu Chi extends help to people of all religions and cited Indonesia and Jordan as examples of Muslim countries where it has been active. During the visit, she saw more than 1,000 volunteers from Taichung and other places in Taiwan attending a training course, at their own expense.

As well as being vice-president, she is responsible for disaster management in her country and very concerned about climate change in the world. She said the fact that so many young people were spending their own time and money to attend a course had left a deep impression. "I am also impressed by the way that Tzu Chi volunteers care for the weak and serve their communities around the world," she said. "I am impressed by the caring and sharing nature of the organization and the determination of the volunteers. This is a very noble vision and a noble cause." She expressed her support for the environmental and charity missions. "We only care for ourselves, we are not volunteering. We are too selfish, looking for material wealth all the time. This principle of Buddhism, as in other religions, is teaching us to go back to basics and serve humanity in a better way."

Tzu Chi has provided aid to the country three times, in 1997, 1998 and 2000, in the form of clothing, shoes, blankets, wheelchairs and computers. The Vice President said that Gambia did have voluntary organizations which build hospitals and help the poor, children and the young, but that their scale was small and the number of volunteers limited. "I hope one day that Gambia and Tzu Chi will be able to co-operate internationally, to bring comfort to more people in need," she said.

[Gambian Vice President Visits Tzu Chi](#)