

Foundation Holds Second Free Clinic in Sri Lankan Town

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation
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Last week, March 10, Tzu Chi held its second large-scale free clinic in the Sri Lankan town of Ratnapura, treating over 2,000 patients in three days. It held the first at the same venue in August last year.

It was the [tsunami](#) in December 2004 that brought the foundation to Sri Lanka. In addition to providing emergency relief, it built a school and a Great Love village for survivors of the disasters; it earned a good reputation among the government and the public. Last August, the president's office asked the foundation to hold a free clinic in Ratnapura, a district with a population of more than one million people in the southwest of the island; it is famous for gem mining and the cultivation of rice, fruit, tea and rubber. While the government provides free health care, the quality of treatment is low and not always accessible. Many people, especially the poor, rarely see doctors. So the authorities in Ratnapura invited the [Tzu Chi International Medical Association](#) (TIMA) to return to the town, which they did last week. A total of 109 TIMA members and volunteers from Singapore and Malaysia conducted the three-day clinic, helped by 60 local medical staff. They treated 2,001 patients.



Hundreds of people were waiting eagerly for the clinic, a rare chance to cure themselves of their illness. Among them was a man named Jemis, whose left large toe was abnormally large. In 2002, he had it cut and then paid it no further attention. The toe swelled and he was forced to seek treatment in 2006 in Colombo, but the swelling did not subside. When the TIMA doctor examined the toe, he found necrotic (dead) tissue inside and decided to remove it. "I am cured once and for all," said Jemis, overjoyed. "I must thank everyone. We are like a family. Everyone has taken good care of me and I am very happy with the operation."

One 21-year-old girl, Priyanra, arrived with a scarf wrapped around her face. She told the doctor that, for more than nine years, the left side of her face had been disfigured by a mysterious and untreatable tumor. The doctor decided that it was an aneurysm that needed to be treated at a larger hospital, in Colombo. "We would not know what to do without Tzu Chi's help," said her mother Leelawathi. The volunteers made arrangements for her to enter the hospital and will stay by her side until she has made a full recovery. Such love and thoroughness is the Tzu Chi way.

Another patient was a mother who was paying a second visit to a Tzu Chi clinic. More than a year ago, she suffered severe burns from an oil lamp accident and was hospitalized for three months. She had given up hope of a full recovery, until she attended the free clinic last August. She came to check on her progress toward returning to a normal life.