

## Restores Clear Sight at Free Clinic in Indonesia

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation

Wednesday, 01 December 2010 14:17

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Medical volunteers from the foundation treated 600 patients at a free clinic in West Kalimantan, Indonesia. They treated 212 patients with eye problem, many of them with cataracts. As a result, the patients were able to see clearly again. It was Tzu Chi's 71st free clinic in the country.

It was held in Kota Singkawang, the second largest city in West Kalimantan on the island of Borneo in a military hospital, RS Detasemen Kesehatan Tentara; it was a collaboration between the foundation and the Indonesian military. A total of 27 doctors and nurses arrived from Jakarta on November 29 and started work immediately, even though the clinic did not officially begin until the next day.

One of the first patients was Farida, the 60-year-old wife of Samsuri, a 67-year-old retired sergeant in the Indonesian army. For seven years, Farida suffered from a cataract, a clouding in the crystalline lens of the eye or its envelope; it progresses slowly to reduce vision and, if untreated, can cure blindness. Farida was going blind. While she and her husband have savings in the bank, they did not want to use them for an operation; they need the money to look after themselves and their two grandchildren, who lost their mother because of leukemia. "Her husband has disappeared and we do not know where he is," said Farida. "So we have to care for the two children. When my sister told me of the free clinic, I was not going to miss such an opportunity and signed up immediately. I must restore my sight because I am responsible for the children. If my sight is poor, how can I care for them? Since they are entrusted to us, we must think of their future." Samsuri's modest pension is just enough to cover the children's school fees and the family's living expenses; there is nowhere enough to consider paying for a cataract operation.



When Farida came out of the operating room, Samsuri's face was radiant with happiness; he could not conceal his joy. "We are extremely grateful to Tzu Chi for organizing this clinic," he said. "They are people who care for us and make no distinction between race, religion and class. This is very good. You are putting all your efforts to help those who need it." Farida added that, although the operation was free, the quality of treatment and care was very good.

The return of clear vision is a wonderful blessing. Many residents of Kota Singkawang are afflicted with cataracts; because they have no money for treatment, they can do nothing, their condition worsens and they eventually go blind. They had no hope of regaining their former vision until the arrival of the free clinic and a procedure that can only take a short time. The head of the clinic, Dr Ruth Oni Anggraini, said that there were more cataract patients in Kota Singkawang than in other places: "here we also have surgeries for hernia and cleft lip and

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palate.” Assisting the doctors and nurses from Jakarta were students from local universities; they helped to look after the patients and give them medicines to take after the operation. One of them, Wenny, said that such free clinics were very few: “this is a rare opportunity for us. Seeing those who have problems with their eyes and the elderly people in wheelchairs makes me feel very sad.” As they wear the vests of volunteers, these college students are inspired to do good, to pass on their happiness to those in need.

[The 71st Free Clinic Held in Kota Singkawang](#)