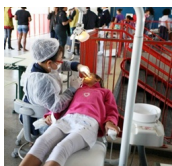


Volunteers in Brazil hold free clinic for 324 patients

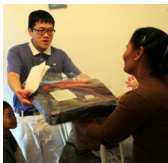
Written by Tzu Chi Foundation
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On June 19, volunteers held a free clinic for 324 patients and distribution of winter relief goods in Cocaia, a poor suburb of Sao Paulo, the largest city in Brazil. It was a brief ray of joy and sunlight in the lives of people who live a hand-to-mouth existence.

The destination is about 50 minutes by car from the liaison office of Tzu Chi in the city. As the area is not clearly indicated on the map, several volunteers lost their way en route. On their arrival, they found many residents of Cocaia queuing up and waiting to see the doctors.

The clinic offered a wide variety of specialist treatments, including internal medicine, dentistry, dermatology, ophthalmology, gynaecology, paediatrics, psychology and cardiology. The volunteers and doctors brought medicine with them and converted a classroom into a makeshift dispensary.



Having seen the doctors, the residents went to the dispensary to collect medicines free of charge.

During the free clinic, volunteers went to the slums to distribute food baskets to the poor. Since it is winter in Brazil, they also brought them blankets, to provide much-needed warmth to the people in the cold weather.

They visited nine households, of which four were single-parent families with the mothers taking care of their children alone. All have four children each and scrape by with a meager social security cheque, making it difficult to meet living expenses and pay for their children's education. One of them, Katia, said that social security was their main source of income and that they were all unmarried and raised their children single-handedly.

Fortunately, the children were in general healthy. Towards the end of the free clinic, the volunteers also gave away prams and diapers to pregnant mothers and those with young children, much to their delight.

A total of 324 patients benefited from the free clinic.