



HARDSHIP MAKES ONE REALIZES AND TREASURES THE BLESSING

Student Volunteers Go Overseas for the Needy

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TIMA doctors in the Philippines for Services and Caring

Super typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda) hit central Philippines and caused severe damage on November, 2011. Hardest hit areas were in the province of Leyte, particularly in the cities of Ormoc and Tacloban. In order to cultivate the international disastrous relief capability of Tzu Chi University students, we established a “TIMA Medical Volunteers Team for the Philippines” in 2013. The main goal is to continue care for the victims and provide assistances for rebuilding their homes.

In coordination with the Tzu Chi's Philippines Chapter and the Tzu Chi International Medical Organization, we arrived at the Philippines in late July and early August of 2013 in tiers. Volunteers



Students from the Nursing Department of Tzu Chi University participated in Ormoc and Tacloban of the Philippines for the Typhoon Haiyan relief efforts. They offered free medical services, rice distributions and homes rebuilding for the typhoon victims.

of each tier stayed in the country for nine days. The relief services included free medical services, rice and food distribution, home visits, and the building of temporary housing, sanitary education, and cultural exchange.

Volunteers in Sichuan for Humanity and Caring

The 2008 Sichuan earthquake devastated the Wenchuan (China) area. In order to inspire students' humanity and care for others, we continued to bring love to Sichuan and care for the earthquake victims. The "Love Sichuan Volunteer Team" was formed in 2010 and started servicing Wenchuan in the summer of 2011.



The four goals of the “Love Sichuan Volunteer Team” are: Self-discipline, Courage, Compassion, and Creativity. The purpose is to provide students the correct direction towards becoming a person of caring for the others. Through promotion of environmental protection, acts of good deeds and filial piety, volunteers team up with the local college students in the relief effort, and also



Indian children teach volunteers to play local games.

encourage local students to stay in the disastrous area for continuous effort. While working in Wenchuan, volunteers recognized their ability to contribute and therefore build up their confidence. Through their services, the volunteers also obtained the opportunities to participate in solving local problems as well as viewing the broader global ones.

Stepping Out of their Comfort Zone - Accepting the Challenge

“Overseas Voluntary Services Youth Group” is a team of young volunteers organized and managed by the young volunteers to perform overseas service tasks. Because it’s volunteer based, young volunteers often confront with events that never occurred in their lives before. When problems arise, they must find their own solutions. For examples, finding ways for team building, searching for the right charity organizations in a foreign land, seeking guidance from experienced teachers, fundraising, applying for financial help, adopting local culture, language, and discovering problem solving skills.

Wei Ko-Yun, a third year nursing student recalled: “When I joined the Overseas Volunteers Team last year, I did not have any voluntary service experience. All I had was the courage to accept the challenge. At the beginning, my English was awkward with no leadership training and had never written any course plan. Worst of all, I never had any true feeling for the process of giving. But, after one year of planning, and hand-on services for the street children in Calcutta, India, through the charity organization SMILE, I clearly notice my personal changes and the growth of my teammates.” Another Youth Group member, Tse Pei Wei, a third year medical school student, who participated in the “Medical Relief Volunteers Team for the Philippines” for three consecutive years said: “Anything you do started from a firm resolution. With an initial seed, with a solid beginning, nothing is difficult.”

Chen Lee-Yin, a double major in public health and nursing, talked about the process of confronting challenges, said: “During my sophomore year, I decided to have an unforgettable summer – being an overseas volunteer. Being independent was the real challenge at the time. Details of the plan include finding the proper guidance, the right charity organization, the adequate English course for local children, topics for discussion, etc. Our teammates were from a variety of disciplines, but we got together, set our common goals, encourage each other, brainstorming, recruited a good director, solved their financial difficulties, etc. Eventually, we arrived in India and started our venture.”

Compassion needs Wisdom - Giving with Blessings

It is not a simple task to bring fortune and blessing into a person's life that lasts. Giving requires thorough learning, so that the receiving party feels respected. Wei Ko-Yun talked about the experience of building Da Ai (Great Love) houses: "Under our 'Cash for Work' program, residents of the Da Ai Village worked very hard to build their own houses. I worked with a group of local women under the scorching sun, with streaming sweat, cuts and bruises, but there were no complaints. They taught me how to install doors and windows, and fasten screws. This is for a simple reason: they were building their own houses. They worked with integrity. 'Wisdom of Compassion' was the lesson I learned."

Abandon the Myth - Start from the Need of the People

The oversea volunteers abandoned the myth of planning from their imagination. For example, fourth year nursing student Shih Yu Ching mentioned that she learned a lesson from the street children in India: "I learned from my services in India that you should not prepare the same teaching plan for children with different backgrounds. They all have different needs for education. Therefore, before you plan your course, you should fully understand the local life style and education needs. Based on their needs, you can then set the goals of for maximum benefits to the students. Before we arrived in India, we prepared many teaching plans, with our imagination. However, once we started our volunteer tasks, we realized that only a very few plans actually suited our students. Furthermore, during our preparation phase, we did not realize that English is a foreign language for our students. To further complicate the matter, our team members hardly understand the local language."

Life Tenacity - Realizing Sufferings with Appreciation

Overseas volunteer services remind our members to rethink the meaning of "fortunate" and "real living". As our volunteers departed from their comfort zone and entered into the environment of a fugal yet simple life, we were surprised to find that children and elders there live happily and satisfactorily under their environment, we suddenly realized how lucky we are, and remind ourselves to live meaningfully. For example, a fourth year nursing student Ao Li Chi shared with us: "Away from Taiwan, I found that children in the streets of India live poorly. Yet, smiles are found on their faces. They are easily satisfied. On the contrary, in our affluent society, we see so many stony faces. Should we learn how to live from these happy children?"



Participating at the overseas volunteering team, to be able to complete it on their own is a big challenge and a precious gift for life.

Wei Ko-Yun said: “They don’t have much, materially, but they do appreciate what they have. In comparison, we take for granted of our abundance, yet we complain. With the experience I gained from these volunteer services, I will spread the smiles of the children and pass the warmth of the Da Ai villagers. I shall always remember the tenacity of their lives. I shall always remind myself to live more seriously. No longer complain, because I am so fortunate to live in a near perfect environment.”