

Bangkok, Thailand

September 9, 2017

First Permanent Clinic for Refugees

By Budsara Sombut

The long-anticipated first permanent clinic in Jing-Si Hall, Bangkok, Thailand was finally completed. On the afternoon of Sept. 8, 2017, the volunteers and

staffs cleaned the recently completed clinic with enthusiasm, setting the stage for the first routine free clinic by appointment on the 9th, offering basic medical treatment such as internal medicine and dentistry to the refugees.

In the past three years, a community medical outreach was held on the 4th Thursday of every month. The volunteers and staff must work together to set up the venue one day before the event, and disassemble everything the very next day



The first permanent clinic in Jing-Si Hall, Bangkok, Thailand was finally completed, and began on Sept. 9 offering basic medical treatment such as internal medicine and dentistry to the refugees by appointment.



The medical staff are treating the refugees inside the clinic, with a volunteer in vest assisting with translation.

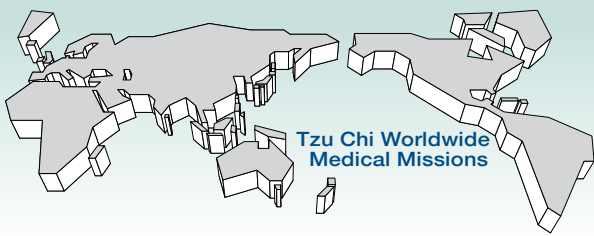
when the free clinic is over. Not only is the process time consuming, and repeated assembling and dissembling took its toll on the equipment. Dismayed by the news, Master Cheng Yen hoped that Tzu Chi Thailand could have a permanent clinic available. Responding to Master's wish, the volunteers soon began construction.

From groundbreaking to partitioning and to completion, it took only a week. As the clinic gradually reach completion, Peng Qiu-Yu, the chief coordinator of Tzu Chi Thailand refugee project team,

was most grateful. "We wish for this clinic can be available for permanent use, so we consulted doctors in regards to planning to make sure we comply with Thailand's regulations, so that we can apply to become a certified clinic," Peng explained.

Doctors and Nurses Working Hand-in-hand

Nurse Pornkul Suksod, who had visited Tzu Chi in Taiwan, heard about the free clinics held by Tzu Chi Thailand



for the refugees, found it very meaningful and wanted to contribute her expertise to the cause. She once participated in Tzu Chi community medical outreaches accompanied by Tzu Chi volunteers and was inspired by what she saw. “With Tzu Chi contributing to the health of international refugees, I think, as a member of the medical profession, I should do something as well,” Pornkul said. She invited her friends in the medical profession to undertake the responsibility of overlooking the health of refugees in downtown Bangkok.

“Refugees are here for years to come. They may have children. We believe every child, refugees or Thais, are born equal,” she added.

While treating the refugees, Dr. Nutthawut Nuchnonsee spotted a young mother with her three children, all with high fever. He examined each of them patiently, prescribed medications accordingly, reminded them to take their medication on time, and advised the mother to take her children with suspected dengue fever to hospital for further examination. “Many refugees



The volunteers are raising fund for the disaster survivors in distant countries, and are responded enthusiastically by the refugees seeking treatments.

can't afford doctors. However, they are concerned with the health of their families, so they come to the Tzu Chi free clinics. I am glad to be here today, looking after their health with everyone else," Dr. Nutthawut Nuchnonsee said.

Successful Fundraiser for Hurricane and Earthquake

Hurricane Harvey devastated Texas, United States, followed by an 8.1 earthquake in Mexico on Sept. 7. The news appeared across all news media. When Tzu Chi volunteers carried their fundraising collection boxes appearing at the free clinic ensuing the disasters, the refugees responded with enthusiasm.

Ramail, who took his wife and children to the free clinic, shared with the volunteers that he had been praying for the disaster survivors. Although in Thailand they do not have a stable job and income, but he was fortunate comparing to the disaster survivors who had nothing left. He felt compelled to take action. Tzu Chi had taught them to donate what they can afford, and little by little, bit by bit, they can help disaster survivors with their love. "We live on the same earth, we are a family, brothers and sisters. When the Mexicans need our help, I will donate what I have into that collection box," Ramail said adamantly.

There is a line the Jing Si Aphorisms, "count me in when doing good deeds". The Tzu Chi Volunteers and the Thais were generous when they heard of the free clinic for refugees, donating vegan burgers, fruits, biscuits, and water, hoping to share with all the visiting refugees. Though all major free clinics have shuttle services available to the refugees, for this free clinic, the visiting refugees were small in number but scattered around Bangkok, making transportation difficult. The volunteers reached a consensus to subsidize each patient with 100 baht (approximately 90 TWD) transport fare.

"Because we can only accept so many appointments, some refugees who did not make it on the list came anyway, and the total number of refugees far surpassed our expectation. That tells us our free clinic is crucial to these refugees," volunteer Peng Qiu-Yu said.

Although many curve balls were thrown on the day of the event, the seamless collaboration of the volunteers managed to overcome every single challenge that came their way. The medical staff, the volunteers, or the refugees all gave their best on that day serving others. The joy of selfless giving is only available to those who give selflessly.