

Hualien

Love for Republic of Sierra Leone,
Charity & Medicine Cooperation

November 6, 2017

The 2014 West Africa Ebola outbreak took away over 10,800 lives; tens of thousands of children became orphans. Tzu Chi focused on the most-devastated country, Sierra Leone, and worked with local nonprofit organizations for epidemic relief. Being a war-torn country for eleven years, Sierra Leone had already been economically depressed... the country hit rock-bottom when this catastrophe occurred.

Tzu Chi initiated the “Love that Transcends 13,000km—Clothing Drive for Sierra Leone” campaign. Entrusted

by Taiwan Council of Agriculture, Tzu Chi delivered 20,000 bags of rice, totaling 200 tonnes, to aid Sierra Leone. Along with the delivery came 120,000 secondhand clothes, 246,000 face masks, near 26,000 pairs of sneakers, plastic and dress shoes as well as 10,000 some pairs of slippers. Tzu Chi also set out Jing Si multipurpose foldable beds for emergency relief.

Set up by Tzu Chi USA in Nov. 2017, Sierra Leone’s 34 Military Hospital signed a medical memorandum of mutual understanding (MOU) with Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital to promote exchanges in quarantine measures and technologies as well as communicable diseases prevention.

The trip from Sierra Leone to Taiwan isn’t easy. It takes about 34 hours. They came to Taiwan to learn because of Tzu Chi’s long-term commitment and caring



Tzu Chi practices medical charity to prevent communicable diseases. In 2017, Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital Supt. Lin Shinn-Zong (third from the right) and Dr. Thomas A. Massaquoi from Sierra Leone's 34 Military Hospital sign a medical MOU. Starting from the left: Hualien Tzu Chi Research Dept. deputy dir. Pang Cheng-Yoong, Dr. Su Kuei-Yin, Dr. Thomas, Supt. Lin, USA Tzu Chi Medical Foundation Deputy CEO Debra T Boudreaux, Stephen T. Fomba, coordinator of the campaign who hails from Sierra Leone. Back row, left 2: Research Dept. Dr. Harn Horng-Jyh, left 3: Laboratory Medicine Dept. Dir. Chen Li-Kuang.

regarding Sierra Leone's natural disaster and epidemic. Sister Debra mentioned when 2014 Ebola virus exploded in West Africa, twenty-eight thousands were infected and about half of all cases were in Sierra Leone where patients were sent to 34 Military Hospital designated by WHO as an infectious disease treatment center.

"One of the goals for Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital is to help fight the new infectious disease, besides other role and responsibility Tzu Chi provides when epidemic is happening in Africa," said Supt. Lin Shinn-Zong. "Ebola is a crisis for Africa. When the crisis happens, we need to quickly find a way to stop the spreading of the disease." Other than promoting the awareness of public health, Dr. Thomas decided to start with the infrastructure by training medical personnel. He said that the concept of public hygiene is not popular and need to be promoted more. The most common problem is the lack of infrastructure: after learning the latest medical technology and returning to their home country, the lack of electricity, water, and equipment, renders knowledge inapplicable in their current state.

Dr. Thomas cited that Taiwan uses different equipment and procedures to screen the blood test. However, they often face the difficult situation with the lack of water and electricity in Sierra Leone. To screen for physical condition, that will require the wisdom of the trained personnel. They need to find ways suitable for the environment to improve their



Dr. Thomas (middle) hopes to build a good foundation for further cooperation with Tzu Chi.

medical standard. Dr. Thomas hopes this memorandum can bring back the precious Taiwan's experience to 34 Military Hospital in Africa.

"This joint medical cooperation has significant meaning to Sierra Leone!" said Stephen Fomba, who is a native of Sierra Leone. He said in 2014 when the Ebola broke out, his uncle got infected when helping a wounded person who was hurt during a car accident and then died. The relatives took care of the uncle were also infected. A total of 7 family members died of Ebola. Not only that, Sierra Leone has many orphans because of the new infectious diseases, and therefore, people live in poverty. Steven Fomba hopes through this exchange program, we will know each other better and also build a good foundation of cooperation.

Sister Debra specially thanked Hualien Tzu Chi hospital's assistance in connecting charity and medicine, especially in training the medical personnel. In the future, Sierra Leone will send three medical personnel from 34 Military Hospital to come to Hualien for training. They will become the seedlings that will influence more people doing good deeds. (Text: Peng Wei-Yun)