

## **Amitofo Care Center – International Humanitarian Relief**

Amitofo Care Center is a non-profit organization in Taiwan and an international humanitarian relief organization. “Amitofo” has several meanings. In Chinese, “Amito” means endless light and endless life, “Fo” means Buddha, reality, and truth. “Amitofo” is a word that Buddhists say a lot, it’s like the “God Bless You” for Christians here in America. One of the interpretations of saying “Amitofo” is “ From deep within my heart I pray that, at the moment of my death, I may enter Buddha Amitabha’s beautiful and perfect land of bliss.”

Amitofo Care Center is a Buddhist charity organization. Its mission is to relieve the desperate plight of children orphaned by the AIDS pandemic in Africa. Ven. Hui Li set foot in Africa from Taiwan in 1992 and witnessed the grief inflicted by AIDS on the helpless orphans left behind as well as the constant threat of disease and poverty on the majority of people.

ACC(Amitofo Care Center) builds care centers to house, care and educate the children. ACC’s goals are (1) to assist, care for and educate Africans in need; (2) to engage in charity and outreach work; (3) to promote world peace through positive cultural exchange; and (4) to protect the environment. ACC’s cover photo on their website sums up what the organization is about: “Developing a peaceful world by developing the heart of loving kindness.”

ACC is also constantly looking for volunteers to work in Africa to help educate and care for the children. ACC now serves in Malawi, Lesotho, and Swaziland. ACC sends about eight volunteers each year from Taiwan to assume positions related to education, upbringing, administration, management, finance, Buddhism and Chinese.

ACC also recruit volunteers from Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia. ACC expects to send 20 volunteers to Africa each year, with each serving a term of around one year.

The main source of financial support is from other charitable foundations in Taiwan such as the Yuan Tong Foundation which helped raise funds in the East and helped with organization and marketing. ACC also receives money from private donors. I have personally seen their fundraising advertisements on television asking people to call in and make donations. All non-profit organizations are tax-exempt in Taiwan. I was unable to find the detail and breakdown of the specific tax codes online. I got the information for this article from calling the non-profit organization, and the person there could not provide more details of the tax-exempt status.

### **Taking turns to eat / A-Mo, age 14**

With both A-Mo's parents dead, the rest of his family consisted of his grandmother and two younger brothers. Though he was only six when his mother died, he still has faint memories of going with her to shop at the market, while she carried his younger brother on her back. As his parents passed away, one after the other, the family's poverty became even more dire. Meals were never consistent and everyone ate in turns.

When he was very hungry once, he asked his grandmother for something to eat. She reprimanded him, saying: "You may not eat, your turn hasn't come yet."

*Jing Chuang*

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