

Eyes For Africa Newsletter

August 2011



HARAR CLINIC January 2011

The January trip began with Julie Tyers, the charity founder, and Michael van Ewijk, committee member and photographer, arriving in Ethiopia 3 weeks before the rest of the team from Australia. They encountered problems right from the start. Customs would not clear the equipment and supplies they brought with them. The Ethiopian bureaucracy proved to be a nightmare. The problem was left with Dr Mawi, the director of Jugal hospital in Harar. It took 3 weeks to get the supplies released.

Julie and Michael had come earlier to do a 7 day trek into the Simien Mountains, a very remote and poor area. Julie organised to take 60 tubes of tetracycline in anticipation of finding cases of trachoma, a very common eye infection that if left untreated leads to permanent blindness. As well as using all the tubes of tetracycline they came across 3 villagers with bilateral cataracts. Needing to return to Addis to meet the rest of the team they organised with the help of the trekking company to have the cataract patients transported to Gonder to be treated.

The rest of the team from Australia were Dawn Andrews - ophthalmic nurse, Ron Hoopenbrouwer - ophthalmic nurse and committee member, Dr Rachna Shankar - GP and anaesthetist, and Dr Jamal Yusuf - GP. Dr Ahmed Hassan - ophthalmic surgeon arrived later for the second week of the clinic.

The main cataract project took place in the city of Harar, a 10 hour bus trip east of the capital Addis Ababa. Two Ethiopian based ophthalmic surgeons Dr Abu Beyene from Addis and Dr Nuradin from Harar also joined the team.

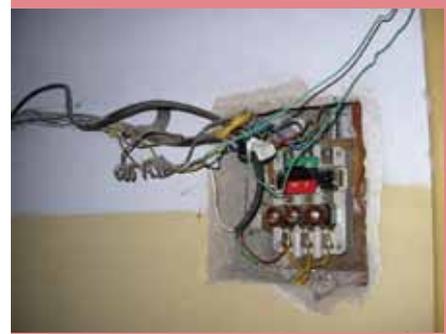
Despite the Harar medical authorities putting on a grand welcoming ceremony more problems arose when they arrived at the hospital. It was very rundown. The electrical wiring was positively dangerous with exposed wires hanging out of walls everywhere. There was no running water. It had to be carried in plastic drums from a well at the back of the hospital to the wards and operating theatres.

It is Eyes For Africa's policy that they target poor Ethiopians who could never afford eye surgery. Unfortunately the Harar authorities had advertised widely that Australians were coming to do free eye care. This led to the next major problem. Over 200 patients were registered before the team had arrived. But many were well-off Ethiopians or friends and relatives of the medical authorities and hospital staff. The team was seeing very few poor village people.

At a meeting with the hospital administration Julie made it clear she was not prepared to keep treating people who could afford their own eye care. So during the second week the hospital made an effort to bring in poor people from the villages surrounding Harar.

Despite all the problems it was still a successful clinic. 193 cataract operations were completed in 9 days. And there were many good stories. The oldest patient was a 95 year old village woman and the youngest was 7 year old girl. Both had bilateral cataracts, that is cataracts in both eyes which meant they had no vision other than a little bit of light perception. They could only tell if it was night or day. To see the 95 year old walk out of the hospital unaided with a big smile on her face was truly inspiring. The young girl developed cataracts at the age of 3 due to either an eye infection or some kind of trauma. She will now be able to go to school for the first time. They also treated a 9 year old boy with bilateral cataracts. When he was leaving the hospital with his parents he was asked what he could see. He answered 'My mother'.

Eyes For Africa is returning to Harar in January 2012. The Jugal Hospital has agreed to send an ophthalmic nurse and health worker into the outlying villages to screen for cataracts two weeks before we arrive. Those patients will be given a date for their surgery and brought into the hospital by mini bus. This will ensure only the poorest will be treated.



MIZAN TEFERI CLINIC June 2011

Cameron Tyers

On the 3rd of June 2011 a group of volunteers left for Ethiopia with Eyes For Africa. These Volunteers were Julie Tyers (founder), Cameron Tyers (Nurse), Ellen Smith (photographer), Elizabeth Glatz (Orthoptist), Julie Cleland (Nurse) and Pamela Nash (Administrator). Like on all previous clinics the volunteers paid their own way. We arrived mid afternoon in Addis Ababa and were greeted with the Ethiopian Customs officials who wanted to observe the donated microscopes that we had brought with us. They then told us it all had to be observed again by another department. They also forgot to mention we had to pay a deposit of US\$220 to ensure we would take them back to Australia with us. This all added to the delay.

We arrived at our hotel all excited to be in Ethiopia and ready to leave the next day for a two day drive to Mizan Teferi to start the eye surgeries on the poor blind patients. With the bus booked first stop was Customs! With the help of Dr Abu Beyene (Ophthalmologist) we arrived at the desk only to be told that we were not getting our 19 boxes out that contained all our medical supplies despite the fact that we had another person trying for 2 weeks prior to our arrival to have our supplies cleared. After 4 days of pleading, stamping, signing, photocopying, visiting office after office and bring a nurse back from Mizan to show the original documents we were received our supplies and were ready to go.

After for 2 days on the bus we arrived at our hotel in Mizan to find that nothing worked and the price had doubled. We woke the next morning all extremely excited about being able to screen our first patients and have the opportunity to start surgeries. Dr Abu had brought along with him two Ethiopian ophthalmic nurses, Senidu and Mulu. Mulu assisted Dr Abu throughout the operation while Senidu who was experienced in outreach work was able to screen all our patients and also perform some minor surgeries.

We started with an orientation of where we were going to work and met the hospital management who were just as excited to see us as we were to see them. We were given our own operating theatre to work in. We setup our equipment and got started with the first patient. By the end of the first day we were able to complete 5 cataracts. Just as we were leaving we were joined by two Americans, Dr Howard Amiel (Ophthalmologist) and Donna White (Ophthalmic Nurse). They had flown in from the US for the second week of our project.

As time went on more and more people were being screened and we were able to complete 93 sight restoring procedures including removing foreign objects from eyes, treating pterygiums, cataracts and trichiasis. The most unusual case was the removal of a young man's eye who unfortunately was blinded by a stick flicked up by a cow.

For me the highlight was being able to have the opportunity to see hands on how the surgeries were completed by being able to assist with the surgeon Dr Abu. Thanks to Julie Cleland who showed me the ropes.

The most touching experiences were the next mornings when we removed the eye patches and seeing the reaction of the people who were able to see again.

Despite all the ups and downs of the two weeks we were all dedicated and pulled off an amazing effort. We all had smiles on our faces right to the end. The team was fantastic in their professionalism and the way they handled every situation put in front of them.





Saturday 3 September 2011
7pm – 12 midnight
The Langham, Melbourne
1 Southgate Avenue, Southbank

Join us for a delightful three-course dinner, showcasing the finest of local produce, complemented by a selection of Domaine Chandon wines.

You will be entertained on arrival by Musiki Manjaro.

\$135 per person, or \$1200 per table of 10, inclusive of a three-course dinner and Domaine Chandon Wines.

To book your table at this special event, please contact Julie Tyers at julietyers@eyesforafrica.org or 0412 254 417.



Join us for a 3 course dinner showcasing the finest of local cuisine complemented by a selection of Domaine Chandon wines.

You will be entertained by Misiki Manjaro

\$135 per person or \$1200 per table of 10 (price includes the dinner and wine)

There will be auctions and raffles all night of amazing art work and prizes.

Eyes For Africa's 2012 calendar will also be launched

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Infant Gelada Baboons, Simien Mountains National Park.

Eyes for Africa has produced a calendar for the first time as a fundraiser. It is a professionally produced, spiral bound A4 calendar. As well as stunning images of Ethiopia each month features a story about some aspect of EFA's aid work.

At the very low price of \$10 it will make an excellent Christmas gift.

The full \$10 dollars goes to EFA because the production costs were covered by the generous sponsorship of Pointon Partners, Ozforex, Cameron Optometry, The Retreat Hotel Brunswick, Mernda Bakery Cafe, Terumo, Ulladulla Vet Hospital, Acuvue, David Street Medical Practice, Evolution Motorcycles and Jette Express.

Purchasing a calendar is a great way of supporting the life changing work Eyes For Africa does in Ethiopia.

To purchase a calendar contact Julie Tyers on 0412254417 or julietyers@eyesforafrica.org
Postage will be \$3.00

JANUARY

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
30	31					1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8 New Year's Day
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29

Australia Day

Trachoma is an infectious eye disease, and the leading cause of the world's infectious blindness. It is caused by Chlamydia trachomatis and is spread by direct contact with eye, nose and throat secretions from affected individuals, or from towels, wash cloths and bedding that have come into contact with the infected person. Trachoma is easily treated with antibiotic ointments like Tetracycline. Eyes For Africa founder, Julie Tyers, is seen here treating an old man in the village of Argen, Chenek. Trachoma is easily prevented if the face is washed daily. The problem in these remote villages is educating the villagers to wash daily especially the faces of their children. Access to clean water is also important to prevent the spread of the disease.

