

Activity Report Eritrea 2011

Again this year, conditions were fairly difficult, although better than in recent years. Generally, the country shows signs of economic prosperity, the people seem all being well off and starvation was no issue this year. There was a remarkable increase in new cars and taxis cruising in the streets of Asmara. And much less children were suffering from starvation, malnutrition or infections.

At the IOCCA there was progress, too. The oxygen supply of the building has been modernized. Additionally, a new power generator for independent supply was installed – a life-saving necessity in countries with frequent power drops.

Together with Trunz Inc., Arbon, we develop a project of water purification for the IOCCA and the newly built ENT clinic nearby. The aim is to purify the water supplied by the municipality system before entering the clinic buildings in order to have drinking water available.

Our team has investigated over 70 children with cardiac diseases at the outpatient station within one week and has given advice about further treatment. Many of these children will need cardiac surgical repair within the next one or two years, many of them valve surgery. The prosthetic heart valve implants heretofore are very expensive. Since the government of Eritrea has no money, we are depending heavily on donations to cover these important expenses. Thankfully, Sorin Inc. Italy is providing us with prosthetic implants on much reduced prices for this purpose.

This year we have operated on 11 children, some with very advanced and severe cardiac defects. Unfortunately, we lost a 5 year-old child two days after surgery of multiorgan failure, but the others did well and will live.

Our native team member showed again a great deal of personal engagement. They are however still a minority. I wished to welcome more of them to teach and enable them, to assure this important medical service themselves in the future. Yosef, our Eritrean surgeon, who's taking part each year, has gotten the opportunity to pass a year of postgraduate education for cardiac surgery in Padua, Italy. He, too made a lot of progress. However, the Eritreans will have to make a lot more efforts to build up a health care system. And so, our help will desperately still be needed for the next years to give all those heart sick children a chance to survive.

The day before our departure we have visited an orphan house at the outskirts of Asmara. The poor conditions there are devastating. Suffice to say, that we did not go there empty-handed, but brought garments, shoes, toys and school material.

Again this year, we supported the public city hospital with a big donation of medical material highly demanded.

Eritrea had its 20th independence day this year and we had the opportunity to join the festivities in the streets of Asmara to relax from this hard work.

Many thanks to all of our team members, who did an excellent job this year again: Gabriella DePasquale, Claudia Zobrist, Tom Riedel, Michèle Mérat, Brigitte Hopf, Fabia Brignoni, Verena Banz, Michelle Kuster, Sylvia Schnidrig, Christine Siegrist, Lydia Blumenstein, Christine Banholzer, Doris Berger, Madeleine Streit, Anna Usterie, Selina Kaiser, und Barbara Sollberger.

We are very thankful to our sponsors and supporters, who made this year's mission possible again.

See you all next year

Bern, 8.6.11

Pascal Berdat

