

Support for the Nekemte Eye Clinic

A contribution from the Exeter Ethiopia Link Eye Project fund towards the costs incurred by a team of 6 volunteer optometrists from the charity Vision Aid Overseas enabled them to go the Eye Clinic in August 2016. This project could not be funded entirely by the charity in 2016 because it was outside their planned projects for 2016.

Exeter Ethiopia Link's overall goal is to contribute towards long term sustainability and a high quality service, so an important aspect of the visit was to have an expert evaluation of training needs.

The VAO team have identified how they can help in future to upgrade the skills of ophthalmic nurses and the spectacle making technicians. Ultimately the service to patients will be significantly improved.

Anne Buglass, VAO Programme Manager, reported: *"Nekemte is in an area that has had very little in the way of eye health services, so support in the form of training and additional capacity in the clinics was very well received. Unfortunately, local unrest flared up and for safety reasons the team were only able to stay in Nekemte for one week, rather than the planned two. Nevertheless, in the short time they were there they were able to achieve many of the objectives and make a positive difference to the local community.*

Overall, the project in Nekemte is very worthwhile and subsequent visits would be encouraged. There is huge scope for more valuable work to be done both in terms of training, and in terms of improving access in the local area through some outreach work.

The staff at the Nekemte Clinic were very keen to learn and were extremely welcoming and receptive to learning. Dr Chaltu was tremendously engaged with the work of the clinic and despite the initial challenges with communication in the planning stages, she was extremely engaged and well organised during the assignment. The patients welcomed the team, and were grateful for the services provided."



During the visit the team succeeded in:

1) Giving additional skills to staff at Nekemte eye clinic.

Patients were seen during the mornings and, in the afternoons, the team did some small group teaching. A key skill needed to determine the spectacle lens prescription for an individual is by refraction; using an instrument to shine light into the eye [a retinoscope]. The team taught the theory of refraction to the nurses and allowed them to observe/put retinoscopy into practice. A total of 4 nurses received training in pairs or groups of 3, and a total of 48 training hours were delivered.

2) Supporting an “enhanced” clinic for patients at Nekemte Eye Clinic.

The clinic had advertised the fact that the team would be visiting. A total of 281 patients received a refraction; 141 Male and 140 Female. 183 pairs of spectacles were issued, and 26 patients were referred to Ophthalmology for further treatment. Working alongside the ophthalmologist in Nekemte was an invaluable asset, as it enabled the team to get opinions on pathology and see treatment being initiated or appropriate referrals made.

Aims for the next VAO visit.

Teaching will continue in order to provide the nurses with the skills to allow them to refract both independently and accurately.

The next team will include a Technician to provide training on using the glazing machines in the spectacle workshop. This involves cutting lenses and was a found to be a skill shortfall. This should mean that more patients have spectacles made to their prescription.

The plan will include outreach at schools to provide glasses for the children identified in the DIFD Integrated Education Project.



Carrying out examinations at Nekemte Eye Clinic

Case Study

Name: Aden Matiuos

Age: 15

Occupation: Student

Patient's home town: Kiltukara

This patient came to see us from a distance of 270km. She travelled by the public bus, stayed the night, came to have her eyes tested by us, then stayed the night before travelling home the next morning. It took her 8 hours travelling to us. She is an ambitious student who would like to be an Ophthalmologist when she's older.

This patient only has one pair of glasses which do not seem to work effectively. She came in complaining of distance vision blur. We refracted her and found a change in her prescription and issued her a new prescription.



Exeter Ethiopia Link wish to express our thanks to the team for going to the Clinic, and our delight that VAO want to return to Nekemte in 2017.

Alex Taylor, Health & Welfare Sub-Committee 01/12/16