

Eye team takes its mission deep into Ethiopia



SIGHT SAVER: In this series of pictures, Danny Chundoo is seen with some of the patients he treated.

Bringing the gift of sight

HUNDREDS of desperately poor people queued under the African sun for many hours hoping eye specialists from Inverclyde could give them life-changing operations.

A consultant from Inverclyde Royal Hospital had taken his team to Ethiopia on his annual pilgrimage to poverty-stricken countries suffering from inadequate health facilities.

Dr Sadhu Gupta had already made eight trips to Asia with his

By Eric Baxter

'Drishti Eye Camp'. ('Drishti' means vision and sight in Sanskrit, an ancient South Asian language.) This was his first to Africa, and it turned out to be his most rewarding. Previous visits have been to Pakistan, Nepal, India and Bangladesh.

He said today: "We were able to operate on 148 people, including a few children, during the five days we were there. It was very satisfying to operate on so many. We just wish we could have

done more for the others who queued up every day."

Ethiopia has a population of 72.4 million people — and 875,000 of them are blind because of cataract, trachoma and other eye diseases caused by poor hygiene and flies.

Ethiopian doctors had screened many hopefuls before the team arrived and put forward 250 for treatment.

Inverclyde Royal ward manager Danny Chundoo, a regular on the mercy trips, said: "There were so many



other people waiting outside the hospital every day we were there that we were worried there would be a riot."

Dr Gupta said: "We had the time and resources to treat only about 150, so we had to make the difficult decision of operating just on those with the most serious problems."

"These were the worst we had ever encountered over the nine years and we think this was because of the terrible poverty and the burden this places on families."

The team were in Bahir Dar, a university town of 100,000 people 200 miles from the capital, Addis Ababa.