

INVERCLYDE ROYAL HOSPITAL DOCTORS

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

Dr Sadhu Gupta, Eye Consultant from Inverclyde Royal Hospital took his team to Ethiopia earlier this year on his annual pilgrimage to poverty-stricken countries suffering from inadequate health facilities.

Following his first trip to Bangladesh Dr Gupta's had the vision to help poor and needy people in Asian countries. To make full use of his skill and experience he decided with Danny Chundoo to set up 'Drishti Eye Camp project' and to date with the help of others he has made nine further trips to places like India, Nepal, Pakistan, Burma and this year to Ethiopia.

'Drishti' is derived from Sanskrit, an ancient Indian language meaning sight and vision.

The Ethiopian trip was arranged following a request by Ergate Ayana, a retired Theatre Charge Nurse from Inverclyde Royal Hospital who originally comes from a western part of the Ethiopian planes.

Ethiopia has a population of 72.4 million people with 875,000 of them being 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. Thirty patients were selected for an operation each day. An additional three hundred people turned up every day some of them travelled from villages eighty kilometres away requesting treatment and would wait all day.

IRH Ward Manager Danny Chundoo, a regular on the trips said: "There were so many other people waiting outside the hospital every day that we were worried there could be a riot. We were based in Bahir Dar, a university town of 10,000 people 200 miles from the capital, Addis Ababa."

Dr Gupta said: "We were able to operate on 148 people, including a few children, during the five days we were there. As our time was limited 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.

"However it was very satisfying for us all to operate on so many. We just wish we could have done more for the others who queued up every day."



BRING THE GIFT OF SIGHT TO AFRICA



The IRH team pictured at work and play in Africa.

