

2011 MEAK ACHIEVEMENTS

Dear Friends and Supporters

JANUARY TO JUNE 2011 SUMMARY OF MEAK ACHIEVEMENTS

2011 got off to a flying start for **MEAK** with four Eye Missions as well as two Heart Trips completed in the first six months.

January saw Dee and I flying up to a disputed area on the Sudanese border with an Eye Team from The Lions First Sight Hospital and four donor/volunteers. The Eleme Triangle is a piece of land which is claimed as territory by Sudan, Kenya and Ethiopia and it is, by a long way, the most remote, arid, dusty, fly blown, God forsaken – yet strangely beguiling - place I have ever visited. The local people are extraordinarily tough, resilient and stoic and put up with hardships that we can barely imagine.



Our team travelled around this area for ten days in a large truck donated free of charge by the expedition company **Guerba**, camping under the stars each evening. We visited countless villages collecting blind patients or those with potentially blinding conditions and transporting them back to Kakuma Hospital for their operations. The **Guerba** truck was perfect for the task and the driver and cook were fantastic; never complaining even after 14 or 15 hours of driving and then being required to pitch camp and provide a meal. It was a tough time for us all. We screened over 2,600 people on the trip and carried out 104 surgical procedures.



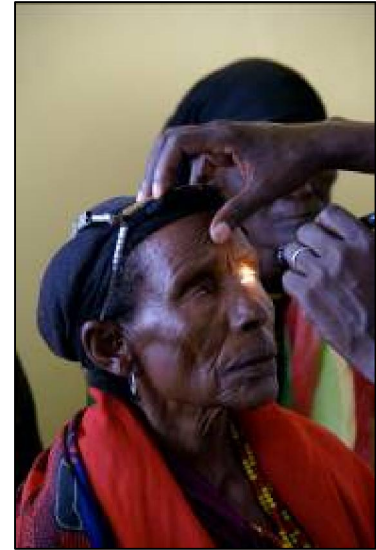
The Lion's Eye Team had been screening in Siaya in the West of Kenya, making several visits from November through to January. Here, in a much better environment we checked 2,037 people and transported patients back to the Eye Hospital in Loresho, operated on 279, and treated a further 20 for glaucoma.

Two more Eye Missions followed in February and March. The first at Webuye saw 2,960 screenings and 260 surgical procedures and the other, which was held at the newly refurbished MEAK clinic in Latakwen, screened 2,187 and operations on 126.

Our pre-screening programme, where clinical officers - trained by MEAK to recognize eye disorders - are sent out into the outlying regions for two to three months prior to the visit by the surgical team, has proven to be very successful giving us very satisfactory results against the financial cost.

In summary, during the first half of 2011 MEAK screened a total of 9,195 people and operated on 769, returning sight to most and giving relief to many painful and potentially blinding situations to the others. MEAK also provided hundreds of reading glasses and literally thousands of eye drops to combat glaucoma and conjunctivitis.

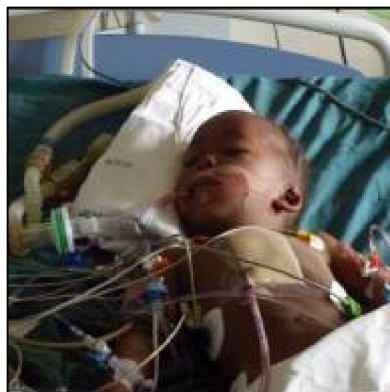




Two Heart Missions were planned for May with the first one in Mombasa and the following week the second in Nairobi. A last minute governmental requirement necessitated the cancellation of the Mombasa visit and with much juggling and last minute reorganization we were fortunately able to relocate this part of the mission to Nairobi as well.

During the 15 days at Kenyatta National Hospital we performed echocardiography examinations to over 350 children and carried out 45 surgical procedures. We successfully tackled only the second arterial switch operation ever carried out in East Africa on a very sick infant aged two months, the first having been carried out by the MEAK team two years earlier. The arterial switch which was performed by Professor David Anderson is arguably the most complex and difficult congenital heart operation to perform on a infant and when that child is only just over 3 kg in weight and potentially has only a few days to live, it is a tense and fraught situation.

Our two teams from The Royal Hospital for Children, Bristol and The Evelina Children's Hospital which is part of Guy's and St Thomas' Hospital, worked incredibly hard during these missions, often finishing late into the night after starting at seven in the morning. It should also be borne in mind that they do this for no reward other than personal satisfaction and MEAK is incredibly grateful to these dedicated professionals and constantly amazed that many come back year after year for more of the same.





MEAK was delighted to have negotiated with Fondation Eagle from Switzerland for funding to purchase a Toyota Land Cruiser for the MEAK clinic at Latakwen. This vehicle will be used as an ambulance to transport very sick or injured patients to the nearest large hospital at Wamba. It is also planned to utilise this vehicle to ferry the MEAK funded nurse to outlying villages to carry out obstetric services and inoculations. As MEAK has no wish to try to control the use of this vehicle from the UK, our partners in this area The Milgis Trust have agreed to manage the vehicle and bear the running and servicing costs in return for limited usage for their conservation works. This seems to be a very satisfactory arrangement for all concerned.

It would be wrong not to mention the enormous amount of help and funding that MEAK has received from The Lions Club of Kenya and their members, and specifically Lion Nargis Kasmani. It has already made a great difference to the amount MEAK is able to achieve in Kenya to have their full support and co-operation and our joint plans for future missions are all very exciting. Lion Nargis has been a tower of strength and an indefatigable friend and helper. It is an often used and very hackneyed expression, but I am absolutely sincere in saying that we would not be anything like as successful without her help.



MEAK plans two orthopaedic missions and two Primary Trauma Courses for local medics in Nanyuki and Mombasa in October and November as well as four further eye camps. All of this requires substantial sums of money, so a special thank you to all our friends and supporters in the UK and USA for their ongoing support. Between us we are achieving great things for very disadvantaged and helpless people who, I promise you, understand the true meaning of the word poverty.

Mike Bellière
June 2011