



Vision Aid Overseas

Eye care in Ethiopia

In 2012, Trade Aid UK is continuing its support of UK-based NGO Vision Aid Overseas who are dedicated to fighting poverty in developing countries by transforming access to eye care. Last year, we funded a team of 6 volunteer optical professionals to work in Burkina Faso where they helped over 2,800 patients – an incredible number of lives transformed in just two short weeks. In 2012 we are going to be renewing our support to Vision Aid Overseas and supporting a project in Ethiopia.

Ethiopia remains one of Africa's poorest states with little infrastructure and an inadequate health care system. Last year's drought caused more hardship and suffering to a nation already blighted by famine. 83% of the country's population live in rural areas yet the few eye care services that exist in Ethiopia are located in urban areas, meaning that only a small proportion of the population have access to eye care services.

Vision Aid Overseas has been working to transform access to eye care in Ethiopia since 2001. During this time the charity has helped to establish four Vision Centres (places where people can receive an eye examination and be prescribed a pair of spectacles) and supported two degree programmes in Optometry at the Universities of Hawassa and Gondar. It is estimated that 90% of blindness in Ethiopia is avoidable and approximately 5 million people are suffering from visual impairment that could be easily corrected with an eye examination and a pair of spectacles. Such statistics highlight the importance of Vision Aid Overseas' work and serve as a reminder that despite significant improvements to eye care services, the need in Ethiopia remains great.

Of the four Vision Centres that Vision Aid Overseas supports in Ethiopia, two are run by a NGO: Garbet Tahadiso Mahber (GTM). Vision Aid Overseas has been working with GTM since 2003, helping to establish Vision Centres in the towns of Batu and Butajira in the SNNPR and Oromia regions of southern Ethiopia. These Vision Centres have increased access to eye care for millions of people and continue to grow year after year as awareness of their services and the importance of eye health develops in the region. During 2011 GTM screened 80,768 people for eye disease and provided treatment for 11,874 patients

In October 2012 a team of four Vision Aid Overseas volunteers from the UK will be working with at the Batu Vision Centre. They will provide training and support to the locally-based staff and undertake an outreach programme. This will help to

directly help patients and also raise awareness of the Vision Centre in rural communities in the region.

Trade Aid UK is extremely proud to be supporting the life-transforming work of Vision Aid Overseas in Ethiopia and helping the world to see. If you would like to find out more about Vision Aid Overseas' work, please visit www.visionaidoverseas.org.