

Focus July 2011 :Smile Heroes of Yemen

A cleft lip and palate charity surgery camp was conducted at Yarim hospital from the 10th till the 14th of July 2011. Over 35 patients attended the free clinics; 22 cleft patients and one patient with severe fibrous dysplasia which had grotesquely deformed the left face was operated successfully.

The nation is going through a severe political crisis and hundreds of thousands live without water and electricity .There is a very serious shortage of petrol and diesel making it almost impossible for hospitals to run any operation theatre. Our charity faced a daunting challenge when we realized that there was no petrol in Sana; Dr.Wahed Nazir managed to find a can of petrol for us to travel to Yarim hospital. When we reached Yarim, we were informed that the poor patients of Hodeida were desperately trying to reach our clinic. Some of the parents reached the hospital with their small cleft children after midnight.

The Director of the hospital ,Dr. Nabil Alsalami offered to feed all of them as well as give them free accommodation not only in the hospital but also arrange special hotel rooms for some of them since the hospital was crowded. The charity offered to pay part of the expenses for the food and medicines with a donation from Mr. Francois Bonhomme of France.

We faced several power cuts during the surgeries. Fortunately, French Embassy staff, engineer Fathy Njeh had helped power our innovative LED ultra lightweight headlight so that it could run for over a 100 hours on three large A 1.5V batteries. All 22 cleft lip and palate surgeries were successfully operated using this headlight.

The Smile Train USA sponsored all the free cleft surgeries for the cleft children. At the end of the camp, we were stranded in Yarim because there was no petrol in any of the stations. The Director of the hospital personally took out ten liters of petrol from his own car and put it in our tank as a result of which we travelled back to Sana'a without any problems.

