

GOING TO ETHIOPIA

We booked our flight about one month in advance with Turkish Airlines (price about 600€). Leaving Germany directly from Munich we had to make a stop in Istanbul. About 3:00am we arrived in Addis and were cordially received by two Ethiopian students who had been to Munich before thanks to the LMU-Jimma exchange. For safety reasons we had to stay at the airport until dawn and so we enjoyed some cold drinks at the airport coffee shop.

In the morning we were picked up by the Jimma University bus, which was kindly provided to us. The drive to Jimma was about seven hours and we could get a first impression of the beautiful Ethiopian landscape. About half of the journey the street was paved; the rest of the way was a little bit bumpy. During lunchtime it got quite hot, especially in the car and coming from Germany in February that meant a temperature change of about 30°C degrees for us!!!



STAYING IN JIMMA

The first two nights we stayed at the *Gibe Hotel* in front of the *Variety Café* and next to the gas station. One double room was 80birr per night; the rooms were basic but clean. Unfortunately some of the showers didn't work. The employees were very nice and there is a cosy place to sit down outdoors.

Thanks to Güls (german student who did one part of her practical year in Jimma) talent in bargaining we got doubles rooms in the *Honeyland Hotel* for 200birr per night. This new and very comfortable hotel is about 5 to 10 minutes walking distance from the University ground. We could not resist this beautiful hotel, which even provides mosquito nets and so we stayed for the rest of the month. Dinner is a little bit expensive, so we usually ate at the *Sports Café*, the *Amharic Hotel* or in the staff lounge at the University campus.

COMMUNITY BASED TRAINING PROGRAM (CBTP)

During our first week in Jimma we joined the Ethiopian PCII students (corresponding to German 4th semesters) and participated in CBTP, a three-week-program intended to raise students' awareness of public health issues in the Ethiopian countryside.

On Monday and Tuesday of the first week each of the six groups developed a questionnaire to survey environmental health status, sanitary facilities, nutritional status regarded to children and health awareness, in relation to factors like maternal education and family income.

The next couple of days we spent walking through the individual districts, for all of us some of the most worthwhile days of the entire stay. Being shown such unsurpassed hospitality by people for whom coffee is an expense and sugar is luxury was an experience one would not have made otherwise. We will never forget those afternoons spent in mud huts having coffee and beers with Ethiopian housewives, and their children watching us as if we had just come straight from Mars.



We went from one house to the next and conducted the survey with standardized questionnaires. We also weighed and measured under-5-year-olds and checked their nutritional status by calculating their weight to age and weight to height ratio, and did a parasite examination with the help of a microbiologist. Since we were not given any funding for medication but thought it to be unfair to send people away after telling them they had parasites, the students all put together some money and we went to the pharmacy to buy medicine and hand it out to the people in need.

Following the fieldwork we had to analyze all the data we had collected. Frequent power cuts and limited access to computers made this task sometimes tiring and frustrating, but we did not let that discourage us and eventually the day came when every group presented their results in front of everyone else, and we concluded that despite some drawbacks like irregularities determining sampling sizes etc., we had all done a pretty good job.

OPHTHALMOLOGY DEPARTMENT

Entering the u-shaped site of the Jimma University Department of Ophthalmology (JUDO) we, Christopher Klenk and Lisa Mey, were positively surprised by this newly build, reasonably equipped and well furnished building. It was a construction in a collaboration project with the *Christoffel Blindenmission (CBM)* and *LIGHT FOR THE WORLD – Christoffel Development Cooperation*.



Dr. Tzedeke, one of the seven residents at JUDO who had been to Munich in 2009 as JU intern, warmly welcomed us and introduced us in great detail to the daily work at the eye center. At the time there are five senior doctors and seven residents who are completing their four-year residency program at JUDO. Together they provide the outpatient as well as the inpatient service with a 48-bed ward. Overall JUDO is the only center that provides secondary and tertiary eye care for the 15 Million people living in southwestern Ethiopia. Thus we were able to experience a large variety of symptoms and eye diseases and participated actively in the examination process and minor surgical procedures.

In comparison to the internal OPD, where we were before, all seems to be relatively organized: The nurse for example always prepared the record of the next patient including measurements of the vital parameters before he entered the consultation room. Usually we started off by inspecting the patient's eye and defining the patient's visual acuity using Landolt- rings. Depending on the patient's complains examination of the patient's eye with the slit lamp, tried different glasses etc. followed. For us it was especially interesting to see characteristic diseases of Ethiopia, for instance Trachoma. Having once seen a patient with an Entropion and



trichiasis secondary to Trachoma, we will never forget those further symptoms anymore. Thus we got to know not only the signs and symptoms of this widespread tropical disease, but also the different stages and their characteristics. However, it wasn't all about tropical diseases. Patients with severe cataract, trauma patients, adults with bad strabismus and consequently amblyopic, macular degeneration and diabetic retinopathy completed the wide array of clinical presentations. Especially the handling and treatment of the patients was very interesting for us.

During our stay Dr. Klaus Peter Boergen, professor emeritus of the LMU and now working for the international section of the *Deutsche Ophthalmologische Gesellschaft*, spent two weeks in Jimma lecturing on squinting and invited us to join his course. Squint patients from all over the region were recruited, consulted and eventually underwent surgery. In addition we were able to attend lessons on the theoretical background of squinting.

In conclusion the practical training at the Department of Ophthalmology was very interesting and enriching. We literally "saw" a lot.

DEPARTMENT OF SURGERY

A typical surgical day starts with a morning meeting at 8 o'clock. In this conference, the responsible interns present cases of the last day and the night. Afterwards, some of the surgeons get prepared for their day in the OR, while the rest start their ward round. Student are free to choose if they want to join the operating team or if they want to go on ward round first and afterwards to the OR.

The surgical ward consists of two female and two male rooms with about 15 beds each and a couple of smaller rooms for four to five people. The major OR is located in the same building as the wards and it has three separate rooms for operations. The biggest one is the orthopedic OR and is usually occupied by a Swiss team of orthopedic surgeons. The others are used for every type of operation. So it is common that some days of the week the ORs are used by different departments like ophthalmology or gynecology.



During these days the minor OR is used by the surgeons. It is located behind the „Telemedicine“. Operations without the need of general anesthesia can be done here. It is simply a room with a curtain in the middle to separate the two operating tables.

I found it amazing to participate with the surgeons because they explain a lot and most of them are really good teachers. Moreover, you get the chance to practice very useful techniques like suturing and wound debridement.

PEDIATRIC DEPARTMENT

Located right above the maternity ward, the pediatric ward is worth to be discovered. Most doctors there are very motivated and smart and they can (nearly) compensate the lack of technical facilities.

The ward is separated in three parts. A general pediatric one, a part for malnourished children and a neonatology. For students it is recommendable to participate in general pediatrics because you will see a wide range of different diseases (some of them you will never see elsewhere) and the doctors are enthusiastic to explain to you every medical detail.

ADDIS ABEBA

An unofficial fact told by many Ethiopians is that Ethiopia is split into Addis Abeba and the rest of Ethiopia. We found this not only to be true but uniquely interesting. The vivid capitol with its crowded and dusty streets kept us entertained for every single moment we spent there.



Philipp arrived in Addis 2 days before the rest of the group. Sarah had been on a trip of her own and rejoined the group a couple of days later. We all stayed at a hostel near Piazza Square which proved to be very efficient and convenient for exploring the city.

Since everybody in the group shared different interests the programs varied a little. However we all went to the National Museum where we saw not only the spectacular fossilized humanoid "Lucy", but also a wide collection of artifacts that date back to the different periods of Ethiopian history. A part of the group also met with the German ambassador to talk about their experience in Ethiopia so far and listened curiously about what he had to tell.



In comparison to what we have seen before of Ethiopia, Addis Abeba seemed like a gigantic metropole. The atmosphere was a lot rougher, more hectic but also full of energy and life. We discovered that Addis is a very diverse and multifaceted place where we could start the day strolling over maybe Africa's biggest market "Merkato" and finish the day at a renowned traditional Italian restaurant that serves homemade pasta and is as one of the many historical footprints that the years of Italian occupation left behind.

After 5 days we decided to travel up north to discover the religious and cultural background of the country and seek for a quieter place for a change. We also said goodbye to Sarah who left the group in Addis Abeba to return home to Germany.

After traveling through the holy sites of Aksum, Labilla and traveling among Gelada Baboons in the Simien Mountains we eventually had to return to Germany. Ethiopia and especially our experiences in Jimma left us with such an impressive mark that we will have a lifetime to live on these memories.

We want to thank Prof. Siebeck and the entire Jimma-LMU Link committee for making making such a thrilling adventure possible.