

## The miracle maker

By Ray Martin | Monday, 25 August 2014

**In just a week he operated on and personally returned sight to 286 Myanmar people, some of whom had been blind for more than 10 years.**



Ophthalmologist Dr Sanduk Ruit

on a recent trip to Myanmar. Photo: Supplied

Daw Tin Nyunt had been blind for 10 years – but it took just 10 minutes of surgery for her to regain her eyesight, see her five children again and for the first time set eyes on her new baby grandson.

The 68-year-old army widow, who lives in Myeik in Tanintharyi Region with her daughter and four sons, had dark brown cataracts in both eyes. For all this time she had seen only bright light, like looking at life through the bottom of a thick cola bottle.

Until last week, when a brilliant Nepalese surgeon named Dr Sanduk Ruit – and his team of eye specialists from Katmandu – came to Myeik and gave Daw Tin her sight back.

And in three days they did the same for 228 other blind people, from the southern coastal region of Myanmar.

At the invitation of the Myanmar Health Department Dr Ruit – along with three nurses, an anaesthetist and three eye technicians from the Talginga Eye Institute – spent 10 days in Yangon and Myeik.

In total they successfully fixed the eyesight of 670 people.

Dr Ruit has also taken the time to teach local ophthalmologists the surgical technique which he has developed so effectively over the past twenty years, using the genius of his hands and top-quality and inexpensive plastic lenses which his world-class institute produces in Katmandu.

The Nepalese miracle maker passes on his knowledge so that other medical workers can start to eliminate the estimated 30 million sufferers of cataract blindness – the biggest cause of blindness in the developing world.

It's estimated that there are more than 600,000 cataract-blind people in Myanmar.

While peering through his portable microscope, delicately dissolving the cataract and injecting a new lens – all with the tiniest incision and no stitches – Dr Ruit quietly answered a stream of questions from the young Myanmar surgeons who watched him on a video link and had the chance to work with him.

What was amazing is that while inspiring fifteen local doctors Dr Ruit also managed to operate on 286 blind men and women himself over just a week of surgery.

That's 286 people who can now see again, who can be productive and no longer be a burden on their families.

Just as incredible, Dr Ruit's top-class surgery was free, along with the post-operative care for all the patients, accommodation and travel both for them and their carers.

The Fred Hollows Foundation – which is an Australian based organisation and a longterm partner of Dr Ruit – paid for him, his Tilganga team and the medical equipment to come to Myanmar. Locals such as Dr Aung Lwin in Myeik also generously picked up some internal air travel, hotel and meal costs.

It was very much a joint Myanmar-Nepal-Australia team effort.

Meanwhile, back home in her one bedroom house, down a narrow dirt street, Daw Tin Nyunt found it difficult to contain her joy as she smiled, with tears of happiness lighting up her eyes. She repeatedly shook Dr Ruit's hands in gratitude.

Dr Ruit smiles too as he sees how much a life has been transformed, again and again. He's a tradesman who loves his work. "This is the most cost-effective medicine in the world and the best," he said.

"There is simply no reason why these poor people should be condemned to blindness, when it can all be fixed so easily."

When we left Daw Tin Nyunt to the tranquility of her family she was still smiling and refusing to let go of her beautiful, bright-eyed grandson.

Today, there'll be 669 other families in Myanmar smiling too.

*Ray Martin is a veteran Australian journalist who was voted five times the most popular personality on Australian TV. The former 60 Minutes reporter and Midday host was in Myanmar last week documenting ophthalmologist Dr Sanduk Ruit carrying out cataract operations in Yangon and in Myeik.*

[FHF-Video auf Youtube  
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VNrMOLDKDW4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VNrMOLDKDW4)