

our mission took place from 4 to 16 October 2023. The group was made up of 22 people including doctors (cardiac surgeons, cardiologists and anesthetists, and healthcare personnel such as nurses in the operating room, intensive care and extracorporeal circulation technicians). We have been working in Eritrea at IOCCA (the center created and supported by ARCHMED) since 2006 and we mostly deal with children with congenital heart disease. Since 2014 we have also started operating on children and teenagers with rheumatic heart disease (a cardiac condition complex in which the heart valves progressively deteriorate and the children become ill). Our job consists of reopening the IOCCA center, putting away all the material we brought with us (basically all the consumables) and then, after having given a briefing to evaluate whether everything is working perfectly, starting the activity in operating room .This year we operated on 20 children with complex congenital heart disease and rheumatic disease. 16 children were operated on in extracorporeal circulation. However, our cardiologists have examined over 150 children and performed a diagnostic ultrasound for each of them. Unfortunately, COVID 19 and the long absence of surgical groups who were unable to visit Asmara during COVID have left a huge number of children without treatment and today the situation requires a greater effort from everyone to make up for at least part of the lost time. During our visit a group of cardiologists also carried out the "rheumatic prevention" mission which is carried out in elementary and middle schools. In practice, a cardiologist and a nurse go to schools and give lessons to children and teachers on the causes of rheumatic disease (streptococcal sore throat) and teach them to recognize the symptoms and carry out the treatment (which consists of a simple antibiotic therapy ) . Once this is done, each child in the school undergoes a cardiological examination and an ultrasound scan. Those in whom the initial signs of the pathology are appreciated are referred to the Asmara hospital to be seen and treated by a pediatric cardiologist who works there. To date we have screened more than 12,000 children from schools in Asmara and nearby cities.