



Hamlin Fistula UK

Newsletter July 2012

The Only UK Charity Exclusively Supporting the
Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital in Ethiopia

UK Registered
Charity
number
257741

(Patients names in stories are changed to protect their identities)

News of Dr Hamlin

Prime Minister Meles Zenawi has vested an honorary citizenship of Ethiopia on Dr Catherine Hamlin in recognition of her outstanding humanitarian services to fistula patients. Meles said Dr. Hamlin was awarded the citizenship for serving the fistula patients for more than five decades and by establishing a fistula hospital in Ethiopia. He gave Dr Hamlin an Ethiopian passport and Certificate of Honorary Citizenship during the ceremony.

Dr. Hamlin said "Although I was not born in Ethiopia, I love the country very much." She said she was very happy to be given the honorary citizenship in recognition of her humanitarian services.



Message from Dr Hamlin

Some of our centres have been very busy, especially Yirgalem and Bahir Dar, as these two serve huge populations. Dr Fekadu is especially busy as the gynaecologist from the main hospital in Yirgalem has left and not been replaced, so any urgent Caesarian section operations are having to be done by our Dr Fekadu. This is just an indication of the need in the countryside. Our Health Officers who have been trained are having a good success rate in safe Caesarian section deliveries and we are keen to get more trained.

In our ward at present we have some patients who are Ethiopian, but who speak a rare language. I operated on a young woman who has been in our ward for several weeks, in deep depression and sadness, as we could not find anyone who could speak her language. However, we did eventually find a man and a woman and since then, and especially after her operation, she is a changed girl. She is smiling happily and has a dry bed! It is good to see the transformation.

I would like to thank you from my heart for your interest and support. You work so hard for us by raising awareness of this need and this tragic condition, you raise funds and do countless other kind deeds for us and our patients. I think of those who make the colourful shawls, now almost a uniform for our patients. We are so grateful and they are very much appreciated, especially as we give a fresh one to each patient to take home when they leave. Thank you for all you continue to do for us.

Visit from Health Colleges of the south part of the nation

Hamlin College of Midwives has been selected as a model for midwifery training by the regional Health Bureau and we have had sixty visitors from three different Health Colleges of Southern Nations Nationalities People Region. The visitors had the following objectives;



Two of our Students

1.To observe teaching methods, teaching aids and demonstration materials which are being used.

2.To share experience with different sections of the college.

The visitors had an opportunity to visit all sections of the College, the Fistula Hospital and Desta Mender. (Joy village) They also had the chance to speak to the academic staff at the College.

Hamlin Midwifery College has set up a research unit and they have worked hard to professionally train and develop the research unit coordinator, Ato Habtamu. He reported, "A research unit is important for our academic institute. It will enable us to take a lead to initiate and support the staff who will be involved in research activities. Research exposes both students and staff to take advantage of diversified professional experience and to contribute to the development of new knowledge.

The research unit has its own vision, mission, goals and objectives. Even though this unit is very young, it has already organized a seminar that opened the draft strategic plan for discussion. Great assistance has been received from the research unit of Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia, particularly Dr. Lynn. A two-day workshop on "The Process of Research" is planned for our staff"



Dr Lynn and Ato Habtamu

Report from Dr Barbara Kwast on her Visit to Hamlin Fistula Hospital in Metu, Ilubabor

It is a very long journey from Addis Ababa to Metu and the roads are not good. I left Addis Ababa at 8.30am and arrived at Metu at 7.30pm. My fellow passengers were Sr. Aregash Gossa and one former worker of Desta Mender.

We had breakfast in Welkite, a short coffee stop at Sorukuuro and lunch at 2.30 pm at Jimma. At 3.00 pm we started the last 275 kms to Metu, the first 150 kms after Jimma has a new tarmac road. We met Dr. Yashina, Obstetrician/Gynaecologist of Metu HFH, together with his family on the road halfway between Jimma and Bedele. We had a short stop to speak with each other - it was sad that he had to go to Addis Ababa as his mother was critically ill.

At Bedele we took a short tea break and refuelled at the gas station. The last 120 km from there, the road to Metu was very rough, corrugated and dusty. We arrived safely, but tired at 7.30pm at the Metu Fistula Hospital. Azeb received me at the nice hospital guesthouse and had dinner ready for me.

The next morning Sr. Aregash came to collect me to go to the hospital. There I met with Ato Tibebe Abate, the Administrator, Ato Bayu Ragu, the Health Officer, (HO) and Ato Wondimagegn, the operating room nurse. The day was started with prayers in the nurses' station with all nurse aides present.

It was a very special experience to see 20 of the 40 beds occupied by patients of various ages who had suffered from fistula injuries for varying lengths of time. Several were older women who had never before had access to treatment and had suffered from these fistula injuries for between 8 and 35 years. Now they had access to treatment and the chance to start a new life.



Map showing where Metu is situated

Ato Bayu conducted the round of all 10 operated women with Sr. Aregash and Ato Wondimagegn and explained about the women's backgrounds and operations. The hospital staff encountered language problems as some women came from very far away places and were speaking in languages unknown to the staff. Four different languages needed to be used as the patients came from Meshenger, Nuer, Annuak Zone and Oromiya.

After the patient round we saw the hospital and it was a joy to see all areas functioning so well. That applied to the operating theatre, sterilizing room, kitchen, laundry and physiotherapy. The water tank is good. The generator is waiting to be connected.



Physiotherapy Room

We spent some time in the physiotherapy room with the women and nurse aides who had been trained in simple physiotherapy and they were trying various appliances.



Kitchen staff in food preparation

Ato Tibebe and Ato Bayu explained about the outreach strategy and the focal points in the huge geographical area where women are first screened for actual fistula before they are transported to Metu. Many

women with complaints of leaking urine do not actually suffer from a fistula but have a prolapse of uterus and need to be treated elsewhere nearer to their home in a hospital with a gynaecologist.

The Metu Hamlin Fistula Hospital has not yet reached its full potential regarding the number of fistula operations. Dr. Yeshina is the only obstetrician/gynaecologist, he works three days in the Metu Fistula Hospital and two days in Emergency Obstetric Care in the Karl Metu General Hospital. Dr. Yeshina has expressed a wish to work full-time in the Hamlin Metu Fistula Hospital.

Sr. Aregash Gossa is the Sister in charge during the daytime and two nurses from the Metu Karl Hospital provide cover at night in the Fistula Hospital, after having worked a dayshift already. The 12 nurse aides are working well.

The patients can see films and for those who wish, they can have prayer sessions with a lady coming in from outside in Metu. A teacher is requested to start literacy classes and handicraft work.

My visit was informal to learn of the activities in Metu Hamlin Fistula Hospital so as to be able to share with you some information regarding all of the wonderful progress in Metu since its opening in October 2010. I have been grateful for the opportunity to travel to Metu on transport provided by the Hamlin Fistula Hospital in Addis Ababa and the organisation for this trip by Mrs. Feven Haddis, Public Relations Officer of the Hamlin Fistula Hospital.

Training Courses

Ato Mergersa has joined us from the Ministry of Health and he is a delightful and hard working colleague. We have recently run 2 training courses. The first on neonatal resuscitation for all our staff who will be involved when our hospitals start performing Caesarean sections for women with a cured fistula who have become pregnant. The second highly successful course was on psychological training and was run by Hana, our new Social Worker in conjunction with Addis Ababa University.

Our project of training health officers to carry our C-sections has now borne fruit. The project at Dangla Health Centre which is situated 75 miles south of Bahir Dar was carried out in conjunction with Intrahealth and the Regional Health Bureau. It has resulted in a health officer performing C-sections independently and training another to do so. The number of normal deliveries has gone up from 20 a month to 60. We are looking to develop this initiative to other health centres and hospitals in Ethiopia. Another project carried out by Intrahealth in Tigray has increased the number of new untreated patients identified with a fistula. We will be adopting this programme for all our hospitals.

Desta Mender



A Story with a happy ending

Emawayish (*not her real name*) is living at Desta Mender and has been longing to find work to enable her to

one day live independently of the village here.

She was married when she was 12 years old while others of her age were enjoying childhood and schooling in the cities. She became pregnant at 15 and this ended with a prolonged and obstructed labour lasting more than 3 days. She gave birth to a stillborn baby and even though she survived, she was left with the inevitable life long injury called fistula.

Emawayish now has an illeal conduit and since her operation she has been participating in the rehabilitation and reintegration programme at Desta Mender. The opportunity came for her to work as Janitor at our Hamlin College of Midwives and start her independent life with dignity.

She has re-married her childhood sweetheart who came all the way from their village to enable them to spend their new life together.

Others living at Desta Mender have been involved in the non-formal educational programme and have successfully developed their skills and have studied the five modules created by Desta Mender leading to skills training for independent living. They have also been learning how to save money and become productive members of society. They have now joined Desta Mender Enterprises as trainees which means they are learning poultry keeping, dairy and vegetable farming, baking and waiting on tables at Juniper Café. The café is open to the public and provides catering for anyone visiting the village of Desta Mender. It is near to the Conference Centre where groups who want a pleasant place to hold a day conference can come. It is through this rigorous training that these women will learn how to become independent and productive within their communities. They learn these basic skills of life in our relaxed and creative environment.

We have a new dairy built outside Desta Mender for 11 women to work there.

A group of ladies have learned all about tailoring and some of them have now moved to a house outside Desta Mender. All this is very exciting news.

We also have a Micro Small Enterprises project where some women learn about food and beverage, book-keeping, work ethics, customer service and quality control. Some have already opened up their own small businesses and are living successfully in the community.

Dr Barbara Kwast visited the newly opened café we mentioned in an earlier newsletter and was pleased to meet one of the young ladies she had followed for 5 years from operation to her leadership position now. She said it was a truly moving experience.

The women at Desta Mender have also had training in protecting themselves from diseases related to HIV/AIDS so as to empower them to take control of their lives. A guest speaker who is HIV positive conducted an awareness raising discussion sharing her personal story along with statistics. This was a success and inspired the women to share their own experiences.

Staff Changes at Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia

After completing a five year term of office, CEO Mark Bennett and family have returned home to Australia. We wish Mark, Annette and the children best wishes for the future.

A new CEO, Philippa Robertson has arrived. She is an Australian nurse and midwife, with qualifications in tropical medicine and business negotiation. She brings with her 20 years experience in Ethiopia, Sudan and Kenya.

We can also announce that three Ethiopian doctors have joined the board in Addis Ababa. They are respectively a cardiologist, a gynaecologist and a dermatologist.



We here at **Hamlin Fistula UK** join with Dr Hamlin in thanking you all for your continuing interest and generous support of our work.

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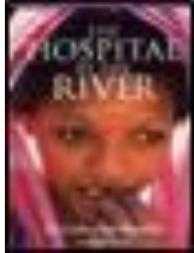
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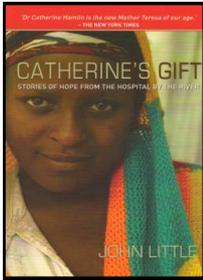
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