



Hamlin Fistula UK

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

UK Registered

Charity no.
257741

Newsletter January 2013

(Patients names are changed to protect their identity)

Our Ethiopian Staff

Our wonderful, loyal Ethiopia staff is the backbone of our organisation. Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia has over 600 staff across various sites: the main hospital in Addis Ababa, our five regional centres strategically located in the provinces, Desta Mender and the Hamlin College of Midwives. We employ gardeners, drivers, cooks, cleaners, seamstresses, teachers and guards as well as administration and office personnel and medical staff including pathologists, physiotherapists, nurses, nurse aids and of course fistula surgeons. Some members of staff have been with the Hamlins since their arrival in Ethiopia in 1959. We are very proud of the fact that Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia provides stable employment for so many local Ethiopians while also providing much-needed health services for the women and girls of Ethiopia.



Dr Hamlin with some of the hospital staff

Staff News

There are many wonderful stories to share about our dedicated staff. [This is Letebirhan's story, as told by Dr Hamlin.](#)

Letebirhan came to the hospital where I worked in 1961, suffering from a vaginal fistula and was repaired through a surgical operation and cured. She was interested to stay on and work as a nursing aide. This career she undertook with enthusiasm and love for the arriving patients, enjoying the role of helping them and learning many nursing skills as well.

One Sunday evening in 1983 she was walking back to the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital on a

rainy evening and was run down by a car. She had been walking on the road because there was no footpath at that point. She ended up in the Casualty department of an Addis Ababa Hospital. Here we found her and knew at once that she was paralyzed, she was unable to move her legs.

Soon she was back in our Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital and became a model of courage and endurance facing life ahead and getting accustomed to a wheelchair, becoming dependant on others for her every need.

She occupied herself with reading – mostly her Bible – and with knitting and sewing for her friends and relatives. Later she did training in our Physiotherapy Department and learned skills which have developed over the years. Many patients arrive with stiff joints and wasted muscles and some even temporarily paralyzed, so need much physiotherapy before they are able to walk or even straighten their legs.



Lete goes around in her wheelchair giving such patients physiotherapy as they lie in bed and she also gives to each patient leg and breathing exercises, sometimes even doing “rounds” with one of our doctors.

She has her own bed at the end of the main ward, living in the ward with the patients, never complaining and always occupied – a life that has been an example to us all. She is our Hospital's

inspiration and in her quiet and dignified Ethiopian way has helped thousands of patients who have received her loving care.

She herself is still cared for and needs help from all our staff to carry out so many tasks, ones which we forget are daily needs until we lose the ability to do them. However, she is never a burden to those who give this care; she has endeared herself to all our staff. Her character shines out by the life she lives and her serenity is seen by all.



A New Baby

It is wonderful when a cured fistula patient comes back to us pregnant with her next child. We give her a place to stay to wait out the end of her pregnancy and then she will have a safe Caesarean section. It is such a joy for all the staff when a cured patient has a healthy baby.

One of our Nurse Aides

No one can empathise with our patients like a woman who has also suffered obstetric fistula. So many of our nurse aides are former patients. They are loyal and hardworking members of our staff and have been with us for many years.





A Happy Patient

A young fistula patient with her dignity restored. She is ready to go back to her family, now with so much life ahead of her.

Craft Work

We use old tights in our craft classes. We cut off the legs and teach the patients to braid them into bath mats for sale at the markets. We use the top part to keep a post-op pad in place. Nothing goes to waste around here! Here is one of our craft helpers making a bath mat.



Yirgalem Fistula Centre

Permission to print this report was granted by Dr Teltschik from Germany.

Dr Hamlin and two urologists from Germany, Dr Teltschik and Dr Weymann, travelled 300kms south to our Yirgalem Centre where they met with Dr Fikade and the rest of the medical team. The centre has 20 beds, but Dr Fikade says there is a need for more. Dr Fikade presented a patient on whom he had performed a complicated operation after



injuries sustained during a Caesarean section in a local district hospital. The operation had been successful and on the 10th post operative day Dr Weymann did an ultrasound examination. He was enthusiastic about the success of the operation and the patient left the hospital for home the next day.

Dr Fikade, Dr Hamlin, Dr Weymann

Arede Gale Health Centre

After travelling on a dusty gravel road from Yirgalem hospital, the three doctors arrived at the Health Centre where two deployed Hamlin Midwives are working. The centre is old and the midwives, Frehiwot and Ayantu, are struggling in their work. They are working together with the Government outpatient department, whose female health worker in charge is considerably less qualified than the two midwives.

It is a Government health centre and there is no running water, this has to be fetched in canisters from the village. There were no sheets, the mattress on the delivery bed was torn and the heater for the newborn babies was broken.



Dr Hamlin spent a long time with our two midwives encouraging them to express their needs and to persevere in the realm of their midwifery profession.



Problems arose on the next day when a labouring woman arrived at the Health Centre. She had a previous stillbirth and needed to be transferred to the Government hospital for delivery. The charge nurse refused transport to the hospital so that the number of deliveries in the Health Centre would increase. This necessitated the strong persuasion of Dr Hamlin to have the Hamlin ambulance come to

transport this patient to our Yirgalem Centre. The birth was successfully completed by Caesarean section.

In order to improve the situation in this Health Centre and two others in the Region, Dr Weymann and Dr Teltschik made a quick decision to buy pillows, blankets, bed sheets, cleaning materials and other necessary items. The torn mattress was also successfully repaired with wide black adhesive tape.

The Yirgalem health officer is working well and more fistula patients are coming to the hospital and more women are coming for delivery.

We share with you some happy news. Mulunesh Gared was treated in our hospital five years ago and then spent some years at Desta Mender receiving training to enable her to work in the kitchen at Hamlin College of Midwives. It was a



special day for us all when W/ro Mulunesh was married to Ato Mituku. Their wedding was arranged by Desta Mender staff and W/ro Zenebu Habte and her husband, Abiyot Abebe, who are the owners of the house where Mulunesh has been living and they have been very supportive of her. We send our Congratulations.

Desta Mender



We have previously reported that three young women left Desta Mender to open up a roadside café. This has proved to be a most successful venture. People from the Hamlin hospital and Desta Mender will often visit to give them encouragement. Here two of them are organising a coffee ceremony at their café.

Hamlin College of Midwives

The college awarded scholarships for 16 girls from different areas of rural Ethiopia who are willing to serve their community in rural health centres after graduation.

The girls are from four regions of the country and upon Graduation, they will be deployed in areas where they were recruited from. An additional seven girls who are sponsored by NGOs working in the country and by individuals abroad were also admitted for this year's intake. These girls are from three different areas and after graduation they are expected to serve in the areas where the NGOs are working. For this academic year the college admitted a total of 23 students from across the whole nation.

Sr. Marit Legesse has been appointed Vice Dean of the College; she had previously held the position of Senior Tutor since 2009. She has accumulated rich experience in teaching in government and private higher institutions. We all wish Sr Marit success for the future.

Fifteen Hamlin midwives have been deployed in five rural health centres. They began work in the health centres in November 2012. There are now a total of 34 Hamlin midwives in 17 health centres all over the country.



*Report by Sr Marit:
Graduation October 2012:*

Dr Hamlin gave an inspiring speech and awarded the graduates with their Degrees. There were special awards for two students who achieved high Cumulative Grade Point Average (*high performance*) and for Dessie Biratu who had conducted 93 normal deliveries. There were 15 graduates this year and all have been deployed to their respective communities. The college is looking forward to seeing many Dessie's who will come up with many deliveries and other required skills before October 2014. Currently 70 students are enrolled in the college out of which 23 will graduate in October 2014. The training is now a 4 year curriculum, so we will not have a graduation in October 2013.

Hamlin Fistula UK would like to thank you for your continued and unwavering support. Your efforts and generosity really make a difference in helping our dear patients. Without your money and support in different ways we would not be able to help so many women at the Hamlin Fistula Hospitals in Ethiopia. For the women who do receive our help remember that it is you, our donors, who have given hope and opportunity to a better life, they would otherwise be in their humiliating condition for the rest of their lives. We can't reach all fistula sufferers but we are making a difference to so many each year. As you think of your charity giving please remember these women who are less fortunate than ourselves and who are dependent on our help.

Hamlin Fistula 2013 Calendar



We still have a few calendars for sale at £5 each by post, £4 each if collected from our Office.

Size: 24 page - A4 landscape. Each month includes a personal note from Dr Catherine Hamlin and features beautiful images shot at the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital and its regional centres.



We have a 16 page soft cover A5 book telling the story of the life of a fistula patient £1 each. (By post -3 copies for £3.50)

Please refer to our website for all merchandise. (Click onto Book)