



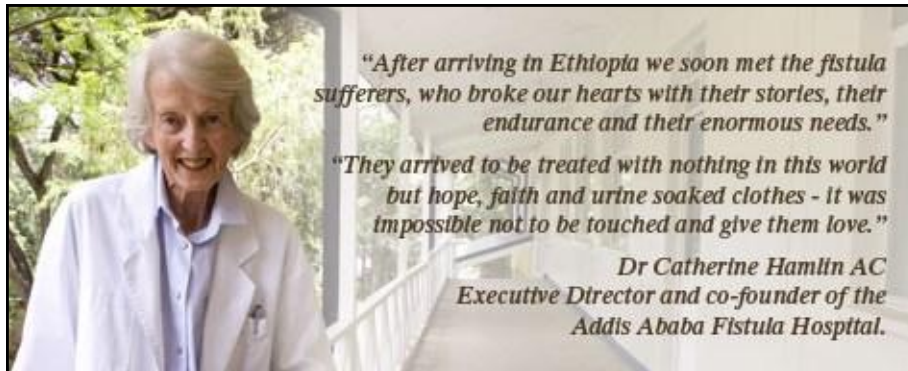
Hamlin Fistula UK

Newsletter July 2013

UK Registered
Charity
number
257741

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

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



Message from Dr Hamlin

These patients are some of the most needy, unhappy women in the world who have suffered severe childbirth injuries. For most of them all it takes is a simple surgical procedure to cure them, restore their dignity and give them a new beginning.



Happiness is a cured fistula patient and a clean, dry bed. It is for such as these who we work for.

Early marriage is a traditional practice in Ethiopia and it is aimed at protecting young girls from abuse. If it is known in their communities that they are promised in marriage then they



are not considered to be available to any other male, therefore it is a form of protection. In some cases a young girl may still be abused if she goes to live with the family that she has been

promised to and the man is older than her. He does not wait until she is fully developed before having sexual relations with her and then, when her body is ready, she will soon become pregnant.

There are very few health facilities in remote rural areas that these girls can reach in time to get assistance when faced with problems during labour. Most will deliver a stillborn baby and many die as a result. Those who do not die will have an injury that we call obstetric fistula, leaving them incontinent and resulting in their life being reduced to misery and rejection. Later consequences, because of the odour from their

injuries, are usually divorce and being ostracized by society. They are forced to live in isolation which may cause them to become depressed, develop a low self-esteem, and they may even contemplate suicide. They soon realize that they will be unable to find a means of income, this deepens their poverty. Here at



our hospitals holistic care is provided for all patients, so enabling us to encompass all their problems.

Once cured, about 25% of our patients will eventually become pregnant again and go on to have a baby at full term. Some of these patients return to us when almost at term and stay with us until their due time. We then perform Caesarean sections and what a joy it is to hear babies cry and what a joy for those mothers to be able to hold their live babies.

Our Seamstresses

Three seamstresses are employed at our main hospital in Addis. These ladies sew all day and every day in our sewing room. They make patients' farewell dresses as well as everything we need for the wards and theatre: curtains, bed sheets, theatre gowns, hats and masks. These ladies really know their seam allowance!



Beletshachew Tadesse

I joined Hamlin Fistula in June 2011 as the Manager of Desta Mender, a rehabilitation, training and re-integration centre. I knew about the wonderful work of Dr Hamlin, the Hamlin Fistula Hospital and the



fistula injury even before I joined Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia. I was always a fan of Dr. Catherine Hamlin and I admired her big heart and the love she has always shown to our poor women. She is a real gift for Ethiopia and to this world. I still find it difficult to believe that I am actually working with her!

I am responsible for the whole day-to-day and strategic activities of this centre. It is a place where women with permanent childbirth injuries learn a trade to prepare them for an independent and

dignified life. Even though they are poor and live with permanent injuries, this does not mean that they do not know anything, for indeed, my colleagues and I are always learning many things from them. My skill, experience and above all, my value to people I believe to be a great asset in working with these women; that is the main reason I wanted to live and work here. To work for these poor women is something that I was looking for and it is my dream work.

I would like to tell you the story of one of our residents, Zewditu. In addition to her permanent fistula injury, Zewditu is always sick as she also has a gastric ulcer. She has difficulty with her diet and she is weak physically. One thing she especially has is HOPE. She shares this hope with others here. She has always had a positive attitude, even when she has been critically ill and had to stay in bed. I would love to know why she is always happy despite the fact that she is so ill. Zewditu and her husband are divorced, but he still thinks a lot about her. He and his new wife and children come to Desta Mender to visit her to check on her health. Of all the women at Desta Mender hers is the only husband to come to visit. Isn't he amazing! One day I cried when I saw him and his children carrying fruits, coffee and grains for her.



I live at Desta Mender with my husband Eshetu Yohannes and my son Barkot Eshetu who is nine years old. My husband is very kind to the women. We love living here, even though my son has a long way to travel for his schooling. My son loves and respects everyone here and he has become everybody's younger brother. They buy him chewing gum, yogurt and other things when they go to market.

The New Dairy Enterprise

Tesfa (*meaning HOPE*) Women's Dairy Farm has been legally registered by the Ethiopian Government. (*We followed news of the official opening of the dairy in our previous newsletter*) Hamlin Fistula staff has met with the women to encourage them to work hard and use this opportunity to change their lives.

There is a large area of pasture land for grazing, they have eight young cows and four of them gave birth to calves earlier this year. There are nine beneficiaries whose ages range from 21 to 35. All are well trained in



both theoretical and practical dairy farm management, including identifying minor dairy diseases. They also had field visits to other farms in and around Addis Ababa to enable them to understand their future business. They learned how to communicate with customers and how to manage their money and savings.



This is all new to them as they have never before had to deal with finances. They also learned about HIV/AIDS and other related diseases and how to protect themselves. This training was in addition to their Non Formal Adult Education Programme which is provided for them at Desta Mender.

The object of establishing such a business for these women is so they can again live with dignity with their on-going difficulties. By having Tesfa Dairy Farm, their spirits are already lifted and they have hope to live again with pride. Some of them were pessimistic to begin with and had a fear of becoming independent, but now they are so thankful of all that they have achieved.



This is Yeshalem from Gojam in the Amhara region of northwest Ethiopia. She came to us about eight years ago with severe injuries from obstructed labour. She has been a resident at our farm, Desta Mender, ever since. Yeshalem has learnt craft and jewellery making skills here and has now established her own jewellery business. She's an inspiration to us all!

The Road to Success

Tirualem is one of our Hamlin Midwifery students and is the guest of our newsletter for this quarter. She comes from a family who had based their livelihood in agriculture in the Northern part of Ethiopia called Amhara region. She is the youngest of 9 children. Tirualem attended schools 20kms away from her home and after school she had to walk several kms to bring enough food for her family for the next week. In 2008 and while she was in grade 9 she suffered much sadness. Her mother died and 3 years later she lost her father too. Life became more challenging for her, but thanks to the small support from her older siblings she was able to complete her preparatory education. Sadly, she was unable to continue her tertiary education.

It was at this juncture that she won the Hamlin Fistula Scholarship Programme that enabled her to further her education. Currently, Tirualem is a second year student of The Hamlin College of Midwives and here is her account of College life and future prospects.

My hope had always been to become a health professional and I am so proud to belong to this College. It is a good teaching and learning environment and this is helping me to study maternal health to become a midwife. The training is very good. The class size is rather small; there are 23 students in my class. This size is ideal as it creates an easy communication between the tutor and the students. Demonstration materials are available for every student and we can get support from our tutors at any time. In addition to this, the environment is friendly and students begin clinical practice from the very beginning of the training, making the College unique as compared to others in the country. My food and lodging is at the College and there are also recreational facilities.



My fate could have been as one of the young married rural poor women who lead their lives in farming. However, thanks to Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia, I won hundred percent scholarships, which is an important landmark in my life and I feel very happy now. As I was recruited from the rural community, after graduation I am looking forward to going back to serve the community where I belong. I now take this opportune moment to thank Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia and its supporters for this good and most valuable scholarship that was available for me.

After completing my studies and fulfilling my commitment years of serving my local community in my noble midwifery profession, it is my plan to pursue a second degree study.

Challenges in Ethiopia are HUGE! The aim of the Hamlin College of Midwives is to train a midwife for every village in Ethiopia. This important challenge will help Ethiopian women and girls to have a clean, safe birth, a procedure they deserve.

Message from CEO

My family and I are truly delighted to be here in Addis and we would like to thank all of the staff and patients who have given us such a warm welcome since we arrived. I think it is both a privilege and an honour to come and be part of the amazing story of Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia and I am very excited about the journey ahead.



Since arriving at the end of February I have spent some time at the main Hospital, the Midwifery College and Desta Mender here in Addis as well as travelling to Bahir Dar regional centre. This has helped me to learn about much of the good work that is going on along with some of the challenges and I have enjoyed getting to know some of the staff. I am travelling to Mekelle this week and I am looking forward to visiting all of the other centres in the coming weeks and

meeting more of the people along the way.

The support and commitment our Partners have shown over the years is tremendous. This support is not just financial; it is great to see the long term friendships that have developed between our staff and our Partners. This gives me great encouragement for the future and I look forward to further developing these relationships over time.

Lastly I would like to let you know that I will be working hard on our long term vision and strategic plan over the coming months. This will involve input from all stakeholders including our Board of Trustees, our Senior Management Team, our Staff and our Partners. The purpose of this will be to create a transparent and robust platform and direction for the organisation to ensure that we achieve our goals and provide long term sustainability allowing us to continue providing quality care for our patients well into the future.

All at Hamlin Fistula UK thank you for your continuing support. Without your money and help in many different ways we would not be able to help so many women. For the women who receive our help, remember, it is you, our donors, who have helped to give them dignity, hope and opportunity to a better life. Without your help they would 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.

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If you wish your contribution to be a Gift Aid donation, please complete and sign the form below and return it to the CEO at the office address

**Mr Laurence Parkes CEO
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West Midlands.
B62 9JJ**

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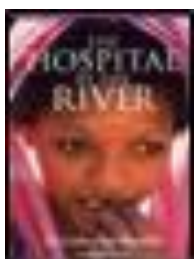
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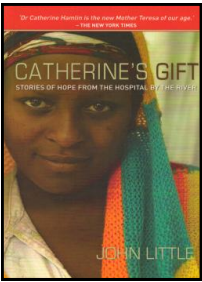
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