



Hamlin Fistula UK

Newsletter April 2014

Charity
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Supporting the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital in Ethiopia

Dr Hamlin celebrates her 90th Birthday!



This remarkable lady celebrated her 90th Birthday in January. (Seen here with her son and daughter-in-law) Just one stubborn candle still alight! The highlight of the celebration was Dr Hamlin's short but passionate speech on the necessity to continue to provide care for these women and to work towards the eradication of obstetric fistula.

More Than 50 Years of Fighting Fistula

Dr. Hamlin is one of the few people who can look back and give a 50-year perspective on how the world has responded to this childbirth injury. It is a problem that has been neglected for centuries and her work has often been a long and difficult struggle.

Until the Midwifery College was established Dr Hamlin felt that barely anything had been done with regard to preventing these devastating childbirth injuries. She has often commented in the past that she and her staff have always been involved in mending the women and trying to get them back into their communities, but the prevention side had been neglected for many years.

Dr Hamlin says, *"We have to deal with the poverty of the patients, we have to deal with the uneducated state of the patients, and there is still a great need to reach them in their villages. They*

have had no help because of their poverty, because of the lack of facilities, because of the lack of knowing about this condition. Very few people know what fistula is, what it causes in a woman's life. They are left to live alone and are often ostracised by their own community, we have to tell them this is not some disease they have, and it is not a curse. Our Midwifery programme is working exceedingly well. Our students are drawn from the countryside and when fully trained they are deployed back to their villages to help their own people.

We are fortunate that the government has given Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia three rooms in the many health centres all over Ethiopia where we are able to set up our ante-natal clinics with the midwives.



Some of our patients

We are indeed enormously grateful for such help. Our aim is to have midwives all over Ethiopia, in strategic places and in all regions. This will foster a more tailored approach to fistula prevention and treatment, with better results.”

All of the staff treats the patients with compassion and understanding, this is better than any medicine. They show them that they recognise them as normal women and that they are loved and they want to help them.

Patient Story

One of the most heart-warming stories from Dr Hamlin occurred recently. A beautiful little boy (*pictured here*) is the seventh birth for this elated lady. Her previous six babies were stillborn and she suffered a fistula on the sixth baby. She has been staying in the hospital for a number of weeks and being watched over lovingly by Dr. Catherine and her staff. Imagine the joy of holding her first baby who was delivered by Caesarean section! She was in the very capable hands of our Medical Director. We all share in this family's joy and hope for the future.



Dr Hamlin knows there is still much work to be done, this affliction is causing sorrow in many parts of Africa. There are still many dying every year from pregnancy-related conditions. “We are now helping these mothers to have a safe delivery and a live baby. Every woman in the world should be able to have this. What we are doing here is just a drop in

the ocean of need.”

Dr Reg Hamlin often said, "A mother is a family's richest possession, a being of priceless worth." They are shunned by their society and often think Dr Hamlin is like a mother caring for these poor young women of Ethiopia. They are shunned by their society and often think of suicide as an escape from their harrowing state.

International Day for Obstetric Fistula : 23rd May

On behalf of millions of women and girls suffering the devastating consequences of obstetric fistula around the globe, we remember them on 23rd May. As this anniversary date approaches we hope to create significant awareness and hopefully much needed extra support for the prevention, management and eventual elimination of obstetric fistula.

Birthing Kit Project

Ethiopia has a population of 80 million people and almost 3 million women will become pregnant every year. Of these, 93% deliver in the home. (*Approximate figures*) The issue of unhygienic births is of particular concern in remote areas where there are high rates of poverty. The impetus for the provision of clean birth kits is the local custom that involves women choosing to give birth at home, together with the mountainous terrain, lack of roads and inaccessibility of health services in these areas. This is particularly so where there are nomadic lifestyles. The provision of the birthing kits has made improvements to the health of mothers and their babies. Traditional Birth Attendants and Health Extension Workers go through training programmes and workshops that are provided in conjunction with the supply of the kits. These health workers provide a bridge between the community and the health centres and they have reported on the huge benefits of having access to the kits. They are making the community more aware of the need for good hygiene, nutrition and the need for antenatal care. In many homes there are no facilities to boil razor blades and string for cutting and tying the cord so these kits are valued because they are small, portable and are 'use once only'. There is evidence that the risk of infection post delivery has been reduced through the use of these kits.

Feven Haddis

After more than six months of maternity leave following the birth of her fourth child, the team at the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital has welcomed Feven back to the executive management

team and her role as Deputy Chief Executive Officer. She could run the whole of Ethiopia! - But is content in a leadership role at the hospital. It is great to have her back.



When she was just six years old Feven remembers seeing Dr Hamlin on television. What she saw and heard as a young child stayed in her memory and as she grew and matured she began to admire the work being done at the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital.

Feven has been working at the hospital since 2009. For the previous ten years she had worked for the Ethiopian Parliament in a supervisory role.

When patients arrive she tries to put herself in their shoes knowing the unhappiness and pain they have in their lives and her heart is touched with happiness to see physically injured and traumatised patients regaining strength and dignity.

Feven says she feels like 'one of the family' when working here and says it is very rewarding work.

Desta Mender

It is on the outskirts of Addis Ababa and way back in 2001 Dr Hamlin's youngest brother and his wife helped to establish the village.

This is the location of our Rehabilitation Centre and it has become a hive of activity over recent years. Rehabilitation is the key word here and young women, once trained in various fields, have left the confines of the village to work and earn a wage to enable them to live independently.

Some who have been taught catering and hospitality are efficiently running the Juniper Café, which is on the Desta Mender site. Glass partitioning has been installed so that cooks and waitresses can welcome people all year round, even in the rainy season. They are very busy at weekends serving conferences, wedding receptions, as well as the general public.



Juniper Cafe

(Some of our UK trustees have enjoyed the food here, recommending the excellent chicken and beef pies served with salad and followed by delicious chocolate cake.)

Desta Mender is also the location of the campus of the Hamlin College of Midwives. More than 70% of all maternal deaths are due to five major complications: haemorrhage, infection, unsafe abortion, hypertensive disorders of pregnancy, and obstructed labour. The outcome is most adversely affected by delayed treatment. The tragedy is that these women die during the



normal process of giving birth to their child. Fortunately many deaths are now being avoided as preventative measures are taken by our Hamlin midwives, resulting in saving the lives of mothers and their babies.

Dr Hamlin: *“At our main hospital we have set aside one ten-bed ward to be a maternity ward for pregnant previous fistula patients so this is truly a happy place where patients can wait until they can safely deliver. Yesterday two patients had Caesareans. I am always excited when I see these patients safely delivered and now with a live baby to hold and love! It is also the waiting ward, so even if they have some weeks to wait it is a place where they can live happily until the delivery time arrives.*

Our Medical Director, Dr. Fekade is in charge of training and recently we had a big team of photographers, sent by the International Federation of Gynaecology and Obstetrics from America who spent a week in the theatre filming operations. Their equipment was fantastic and our theatre was packed with cameras and screens. Dr Andrew Browning flew up from Tanzania to participate in the film with our Ethiopian surgeons. We hope a good teaching film will be produced.”

Other news is the retirement of some of our staff when they reach the age of 65. We were all sad when our Matron retired but she was anxious to nurse her mother who was very ill. We all miss her, but of course we keep in touch as she was a very beloved matron, especially a “Mother” to our nurse aides.”



Matron Ejigayehue, now retired

Welcome Aboard

Dr Karen Ballard and Professor Jeremy Wright from Surrey in UK have joined the HFE Team.

Karen has been appointed as a Research Co-ordinator. She has considerable experience as a researcher and lecturer in Surrey University and has a PhD in Medical Sociology. She also has a



nursing and midwifery background. Karen will be working with our research and ethics committee and our monitoring and evaluation team. This will help shape our research strategy and build our capabilities in this area as well as helping our lecturing staff in the college to develop their research programme with the students.

Jeremy, OBGYN, is an experienced surgeon and gynaecologist and will be joining our clinical team in Addis as a Fistula surgeon as well as assisting with training and skills development. He will also be providing support to some of our regional centres where we have shortages of experienced doctors.

Both Karen and Jeremy spent a year working in Obstetric care in Gimbie, West Wollega where they got the bug for Ethiopia and this has brought them back for more!



A Caesarean birth – another live baby!



We are delighted to report that there is a steady increase in the number of babies being born at HFE. It is a joy to witness many of our ex fistula patients return to the hospital to await the birth of their babies. They are encouraged to return to the hospital well in advance of their due date. For our

doctors and theatre staff, it can be a welcome relief from more complex surgeries. Witnessing these live births is



all the more poignant as many of these women have endured the pain of at least one still birth in addition to suffering fistula during obstructed labour.

Visitors from Uganda

Alice Emasu and her team from Terrewode in Uganda recently visited the hospital to meet with Dr. Hamlin and other members of the HFE team. This was part of a study trip for them to learn more about how we do things at Hamlin Fistula. Terrewode have been working with fistula patients in Uganda for many years and it was a very useful exchange of experiences and ideas. We are looking at concrete ways of sharing knowledge and assisting them with some technical support and training.



Patient's Story

Mahabouba Muhammad was sold at age 13 to be the second wife of a 60-year-old man. She became pregnant, delivered by herself in the bush and suffered a severe fistula injury. Villagers, believing her to be cursed, left her for the hyenas. But she fought off the hyenas and because nerve damage from labour had left her unable to walk, she crawled for miles to get help. At Dr. Hamlin's hospital she underwent surgery and is now a nurse aide at the hospital.

Latest News

As well as celebrating her 90th Birthday this year, Dr Hamlin has been nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize. She is well deserving of this award for as we know, Dr Hamlin has saved more than 36,000 Ethiopian women from a life of rejection, misery and shame.

(Dr Hamlin's son says "Mum has one son and about 36,000 daughters!")

UK News

I am a stick-maker and people are fascinated by where my sticks go. One of the UK Trustees asked me if I could make a stick for Dr Hamlin to help maintain her mobility. Knowing she has

an interest in horses I set about the task of making two for her and I shaped the handles into the shape of a horse's head. They were delivered to her on an occasion when she was in England visiting her family. I have received a letter of thanks from Dr Hamlin telling me how delighted she is and that the sticks are very special to her. I too am delighted that I have been able to help her. *Geoff Kings.*



All at **Hamlin Fistula UK** thank you for your continuing support. Without your gifts we would not be able to help so many women. Your help gives these women the dignity they deserve and the hope and opportunity to a better life.



If you need a sign to point you in the right direction for your giving, try this one!

Drs. Reginald and Catherine Hamlin came to Ethiopia to work in 1959. They were pioneers in performing surgery for women suffering from obstetric fistula. Once they began this work, the need became so great that in 1974 they established the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital specifically for women with childbirth injuries. Dr Reg. Hamlin died in 1993 but Dr Catherine Hamlin never doubted that the work had to continue. The Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital is an organization that cares for women with childbirth and related injuries. These women come to us destitute, in nothing but their urine soaked clothes, and more often than not, barefoot. Distanced by their relatives, we are their only hope; therefore **all care, treatment and surgery is completely free of charge.**

The Hamlins first came to Birmingham in 1967 on a fundraising tour. Dr Reginald Hamlin lectured at the University of Birmingham, which has a Medical School with an outstanding record as a teaching hospital. The Charity was formed immediately after this visit to support them in their wonderful healing work.

There are many ways you can support us.

A direct gift of cash

A regular gift by 'standing order'

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A CAF Card or Credit Card through our secure website– just click on 'Ways of Giving'. There are special arrangements to give relief from Inheritance Tax on bequests, and from Capital Gains Tax on gifts of shares.

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

Mr Laurence Parkes,
Hamlin Fistula UK, 4 Nimmings Road,
Halesowen, West Midlands, B62 9JJ

Please accept the enclosed donation for the work of the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital through the Charity **Hamlin Fistula UK**.

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If you wish to Gift Aid this donation, please tick and sign below

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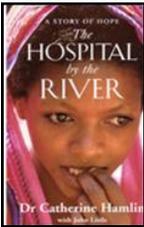
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“Two for One”

This 16 page soft cover A5 book tells the story of the life of a fistula patient. **£1 each** or **by post -3 copies for 3.50**

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