



Hamlin Fistula UK

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

Charity
Number:
1153053

Newsletter January 2015

(All patients' names are changed to protect their identity.)

Dr Hamlin says:

**“My dream is to eradicate obstetric fistula from Ethiopia. I won't
achieve this in my lifetime, but you might in yours.”**

The dream of Dr Hamlin is already being fulfilled in the training of women at the Hamlin College of Midwives. Students undergo four years of training before receiving their BSc. Degree in Midwifery. A distinctive feature of the course is that students receive clinical training from the start, so that by the time they graduate they will have accumulated an enormous amount of experience in delivering babies.

In the autumn of 2014 one of our UK Trustees was privileged to attend the 4th Midwifery Graduation Ceremony which was held at Desta Mender, on the campus of the Midwifery College.



Jean reports, “It was a grand occasion and one that I shall not forget. The 24 midwives who are now highly trained were happy in knowing that they are skilled to help mothers through antenatal care, the delivery of babies and postnatal care. Soon after I left for home, they were to be deployed back to their home areas where they will work in pairs in a health clinic. As well as helping pregnant mothers in the village communities they will run clinics for children from birth to five years, they will offer a range of family planning services and hold women’s health programmes. They are all highly skilled in identifying women at risk from complications in childbirth. The mothers can then be taken to a regional hospital for a Caesarean section or other suitable procedure. One new graduate had delivered 113 live babies during her training. What an achievement!

Special thanks was given to the Dean of the College, Ato Zelalem to Vice Dean-Sr Marit, Sr Giday and all the other tutors who had successfully nurtured the students through the course, while not forgetting the other 1st, 2nd and 3rd year students in their care. I have included here excerpts from some of the speeches delivered to the new midwives ” .

Message to Graduates from Dr Hamlin.

Congratulations to you all for now being fully qualified midwives belonging to one of the oldest professions, even mentioned in the first book of the Bible! Your 4 years of study are over and you have passed all those stressful examinations. Two of you will be working together in your quiet antenatal clinics, so you can help one another over decisions that have to be made - and the practice of midwifery is full of urgent decision making. Never be afraid to ask for help from the College here. Remember always to be cheerful, kind and confident, show concern for each patient and treat them all as though they are your sister, to help relieve their fears. You will be able to contact our nearest Fistula Hospital where there is a Midwifery Ambulance to transport a patient who is in urgent need. I am proud of you all. You are fulfilling my dream to have a midwife in every town and village in Ethiopia. I love you all and am proud that you have chosen a profession which will be a blessing to all the mothers in Ethiopia.

May God bless each one of you.



from left to right

**Mr Martin Andrews,
Dr Hamlin,
Dr Barbara Kwast,
Ato Zelalem**

Message from Sr Marit, Vice Dean

Dear Graduates, as qualified midwives you know that the knowledge and skills you have acquired during your training will serve you as a tool by which you tackle the existing



maternal and newborn health problems and make a real difference to their health. With this in mind, I wish you all the best in your future career.

Dear Dr Hamlin, may I use this opportunity to extend my thanks and appreciation for your lifelong commitment to the healthcare needs of the rural Ethiopian women, and I am proud of seeing your vision coming true.

Sr Giday and Sr Marit

Message from CEO Martin Andrews

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate each and every one of the graduates and all of the staff at Hamlin College of Midwives who have worked tirelessly to make this happen. This indeed is a day to be proud of. We should all be proud of the fact that we are taking yet another step towards achieving our founder, Dr Hamlin's dream of a world without obstetric fistula or maternal mortality.

Dr Barbara Kwast, a consultant on maternal health and safe motherhood, emphasised that the Graduates now belong to a world community of midwives, united in the White Ribbon Alliance which endeavours to reduce maternal and perinatal mortality.

Dr Barbara gave a great deal of her time (2009– 2011) to the first three groups of students during their clinical attachment in the rural Roman Catholic missionary hospital in Attat, south east of Addis Ababa. The students were trained in all aspects of midwifery, especially in emergency obstetric care, enabling them to learn diagnosis and management of complications during the antenatal, delivery and postnatal period. She has a profound knowledge in maternal and perinatal mortality and morbidity. While working with the students she implemented the partograph for the management of labour.

(By using the partograph there is evidence that prolonged labour and Caesarean sections can be reduced. This leads to improvement of quality of care by helping midwives interpret the progress of labour and so help in their decision making.)

Dr Reginald Hamlin said to Catherine when they first came to Ethiopia, “Let’s stay and light a candle for Africa”. The candle they lit all those years ago still burns today. Here the graduates promise to help the pregnant women of Ethiopia



The motto of the Midwifery College is “A Midwife for Every Woman”

Up-grades to Midwifery Clinics

The 17 existing Hamlin-funded midwifery clinics in rural Ethiopia are to undergo significant upgrades which will make those clinics much more efficient and bring them up to a high standard of care. Each clinic requires upgrades unique to its location. This is good news for the 5000 babies expected to be born in these clinics over the next year.

Patients are appreciative of all that is being done to help restore their dignity.



“I thought I was the only one in Ethiopia with this terrible problem. Since I gave birth to a dead baby boy I have leaked urine constantly. It has eaten away at my skin. The pain is terrible but the shame is much worse. When I came here, I could not believe my eyes. There are so many other girls suffering in the same way. This is the first time I have been able to smile”.

This attractive young lady thinks she is about twenty. Her story is a common one: a very long obstructed labour, a stillbirth and incontinence. After four days of labour she was taken to her local hospital where the dead baby was taken away, but it was not explained to her why she was leaking. Instead they instructed her to come back in three months' time. She was depressed and crying. Then her husband left her, so she stayed in her parents' village, heartbroken. Eventually, her brother took her to our fistula hospital at Bahir Dar where she was assessed and transferred to Addis Ababa for complex diversion surgery to cure her injuries. After several operations the incontinence is cured but she still needs much physiotherapy for the nerve damage she suffered during her labour.



This beautiful patient is from the far north of Ethiopia and suffered permanent spinal damage during an obstructed labour that lasted for eight long days. Her baby was stillborn. She will never walk again, but her obstetric fistula can be cured. Here she is lying on the grass in the sunshine. Despite everything she has been through, she has a wicked sense of humour. Her best friend was another patient who has dwarfism and the two of them did not stop talking, laughing and poking fun at the photographer – me.”

Lucy Perry.

At the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital the staff cares for the whole patient, not just the injury - this is called 'holistic care'. Numeracy and literacy classes, counselling and craft activities are all part of the healing process.

Here we see a patient plaiting her new friend's hair, a pastime often shared amongst patients. A new mother with her baby is looking on in the background.



When a fistula patient arrives at the gates of one of our hospitals in Ethiopia she is made welcome, given clean clothes and a bed. Her treatment is free thanks to generous donors. We are humans helping humans, no matter what their beliefs.

Dr Andrew Browning Is Back Training Surgeons.

Many supporters will be familiar with Australian fistula surgeon Dr Andrew Browning. When he worked for Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia he was medical director at our regional outreach hospital in Bahir Dar until 2011. Dr Andrew met Dr. Hamlin when he trained at the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital almost 20 years ago and they have remained friends ever since. During his time in Ethiopia with Dr Hamlin, Andrew was responsible for developing a competency based training module in obstetric fistula in conjunction with the International Federation of Gynaecology and Obstetrics (FIGO). He has agreed to work with Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia in the delivery of this training and now comes to Addis Ababa on a regular basis to help with the training of surgeons from other countries.



Through the Barbara May Foundation Andrew is responsible for establishing maternity units in Bahir Dar and Afar in northern Ethiopia and he is also supporting three other government hospitals. We are collaborating with Barbara May Foundation in Bahir Dar where the Hamlin midwifery students are deployed for some of their clinical practice during their training. We are assisting with training for their laboratory staff in Afar where they regularly refer patients to the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital. We are thrilled to be collaborating with Dr Andrew on these initiatives. Welcome back!

"Dr Hamlin was humbled by the news that Dr Tedros Adhanom, the Ethiopian Minister for Foreign Affairs, had chosen to nominate her for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014. It was a great honour and a privilege for her to be held in such a high esteem by the Minister who has been a great supporter of Dr Hamlin and her work in Ethiopia for many years". Martin Andrews, CEO, HFE.

Dr Barbara Kwast and Jean sat with Dr Hamlin earnestly waiting for the announcement of the Nobel Prize Winner for 2014. We knew that she was in the last eleven people in the run-up to the announcement. Unfortunately the award was not for Dr Hamlin this time, but what an honour for her to have been nominated and to have reached the last eleven candidates.



There isn't much time for baking in Dr Hamlin's busy schedule, but she is always ready to offer her home-baked biscuits to her visitors. Today, during our anxious wait, she shared with us a cup of tea and her delightful ginger biscuits.

Since the publication of our previous Newsletter, HRH Princess Anne has visited Addis Ababa and she is seen here talking with Dr. Hamlin. HRH had previously visited the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital some years ago and Dr Hamlin was able to show her some photographs of that visit.



*Good news!***Ethiopia hopes to end FGM and Child Marriage by 2025**

This announcement was made at the first ever Girl Summit in London. The Deputy Prime Minister, H.E. Demeke Mekonnen and the Women's, Children and Youth Affairs Minister, Zenebu Tadesse, aimed at mobilising domestic and international efforts to end FGM and child, early and forced marriage within a generation. The Deputy Prime Minister stressed the importance of educating and empowering girls and women, saying that more than 10 million girls have been enrolled in school in Ethiopia. He said this is the surest way of protecting girls and women from these harmful practices.

Another important factor which positively contributes to the fight against FGM and child marriage is the deployment of more than 38,000 health extension workers who will work at community level in remote parts of Ethiopia.

The Minister highlighted the experience of one Ethiopian girl who was a victim of FGM in her early childhood and how she stood up to protect her rights by joining a girl's club which empowers them to involve teachers and police when they hear about threats of child marriage. He stressed the need to fully support the mission of these girls, as they are instrumental in helping to bring about lasting solutions.

W/ro Zenebu highlighted the results that Ethiopia has registered in fighting these harmful traditional practices. The national rate of FGM has decreased by half among girls aged 14 and under and national prevalence of child marriage has decreased also.

The approach the Ethiopia government is taking puts girls at the heart of their commitment by working closely with them, their families and communities, to end these practices for good and break the cycle of harmful traditional practices.

The Girl Summit was co-hosted by the UK government and UNICEF and brought together women, girls and community leaders from all over the world, together with governments, international organisations and the private sector.

All at **Hamlin Fistula UK** thank you for your continuing generous support.

Without your gifts we would not be able to help so many women.

Your help gives them the dignity they deserve and the hope and opportunity to a better life.

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

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.

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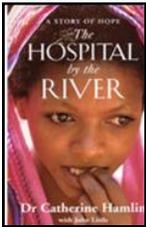
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