



Hamlin Fistula UK

Supporting the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital in Ethiopia

Charity
Number:
1153053

Newsletter July 2017

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



Our hospitals still continue to treat and care for patients who have suffered a childbirth injury called obstetric fistula and our commitment to stopping this injury occurring in the first place has never been stronger. Since its beginning, the Hamlin College of Midwives has graduated more than 100 midwives. In the last 12 months these midwives have attended more than 20,000 deliveries and not a single fistula injury has occurred. Nearly 100 more

students are currently enrolled in the Hamlin's four-year BSc degree course in Midwifery. Dr Hamlin is thrilled that the prevention methods being implemented are helping to eradicate obstetric fistula from Ethiopia - and it is working. We would like to thank all of you for your continuing support.

Aregu's Story

Aregu lives in a small village in the Oromiya Region. It is a remote village consisting of just a few scattered huts and with no access to healthcare. The



community here is traditionally known for its nomadic lifestyle. At age 17, Aregu became pregnant with her first child. This was an exciting time for her and her family and they spent the last three months of the pregnancy preparing for the new baby's birth. Her mother told her she

would be her side for the delivery - the only assistance Aregu would have during labour. When Aregu's labour began she could never have imagined the nightmare that was to follow. Her labour was obstructed and lasted for five long and painful days. By the fifth day, exhausted, Aregu fell unconscious after delivering a stillborn baby. Tragically she was left with an obstetric fistula and was continually leaking bodily waste. Her husband soon found that living with her condition was becoming unbearable and he left her. For the next three years Aregu lived with her mother in her small hut continuing to leak urine and believing there was no solution. Health professionals visiting the area found her and took her to our Yirgalem Fistula Hospital for treatment. Given the complexity of Aregu's injury, she was hospitalised for five months and had to undergo two surgeries, the second at our main hospital in Addis Ababa. Aregu's happiness after her successful treatment is immeasurable. She feels she has been given a second chance in life. She said, "Dr Hamlin and her staff gave me my life back and made me a woman again. I thank you and love you from the bottom of my heart".

Fetenech's new way of life.

Fetenech didn't have access to a midwife to deliver her baby. After three days of labour, her baby was stillborn and she was left with a double fistula. Urine and faeces ran down her legs. Her injuries were severe and after her surgery she went to live at Desta Mender (Joy Village). Here, she was able to receive ongoing treatment whilst learning business skills. She worked at Hamlin's Juniper Café and in our dairy.



Two years ago she opened her own coffee house near Desta Mender. She is now living with her husband and is busy every day serving Ethiopian coffee to her customers. "I am very happy and I never thought that I would be living outside my village, but now thanks to 'Emmaye's' (Dr Hamlin's) holistic support I am cured from the dreadful injury and have started my own business."

Desta Mender

You often read in our newsletters of patients staying at this village after surgery where they recuperate and learn life-skills to enable them to live independently again. But how much do you know about this amazing place?

Desta Mender means 'Joy Village' and it is situated in the Oromiya Region on the outskirts of

Addis Ababa. The site was given to Dr Hamlin in the year 2000 by the Oromiya Regional Government. It was decided that a small village would be built where fistula survivors could live after having diversion surgery and their need to stay close to the hospital due to their on-going medical care and management. It is also a waiting area for those scheduled for surgery, so easing the burden on the hospital in Addis Ababa.



In 2012 Desta Mender became a rehabilitation and reintegration training centre for these fistula survivors. “The object is to see self-sufficient women who could replay their social roles with better livelihood options in their communities. Positive outcomes are attained when circumstances that affect the physical, psycho-social, economic and awareness issues are addressed in a holistic fashion,” says Beletshachew, the Rehabilitation and Reintegration Manager. Now groups of long-term fistula survivors stay for a maximum of three months, depending on their training needs. Beletshachew says that this work is tailor-made as it is directly linked to the survivor’s treatment and health condition. Holistic support to women with childbirth injuries has always been an important factor when helping these women.

This Village is a real source of joy and dignity for women with serious fistula injuries, as the following story illustrates.



We take a look at the life of Ewawey, a little girl whose age was estimated at twelve years when she left her home in Amhara Region and began the desperate journey - aiming at nowhere - but running away from the traumatised life she was living because of the effects of fistula. After walking and travelling by bus for two weeks she found herself in Addis Ababa. But she knew nothing of life in a big city and not knowing where to go, she spent a week living on the streets of

Addis. One day, early in the morning, a woman found Ewawey sitting in a church, so she took her home, thinking she would be able to work as her maid. Ewawye was soon forced to leave the house after the woman realised she was incontinent. She said, “I gave up all hope and thought about committing suicide as I felt that was going to be a solution to my problems. Miraculously, an old woman appeared by my side and asked me what had happened. She was so sad for me and she took me to her home and gave me food. After two days of motherly care she brought me here, to the fistula hospital. She was like an angel to me.” And that is how her life with Hamlin started eight years ago. She required diversion surgery and living with the condition she is now in, she needs much loving care, both holistically and psychologically, to help her through her trauma.

Ewawey is living at Desta Mender and has had several training sessions, including some dairy farming, vegetable production and craft making. All of these activities are helping her to move forward. She says, “Desta Mender is my re-birth place. I thank God and all the staff who have helped me. I now have a bright future.”



This story is a living witness to all that is done at the village of joy, known as Desta Mender.



The first ever Ethiopian Girls Award

The purpose of the award is to recognise outstanding efforts of individuals and institutions that contribute to the advancement of education and gender equality and empowerment of girls. The award in its first year was named after Dr Hamlin whose life-long work has been to provide free fistula repair surgery to poor women suffering from these devastating childbirth injuries. The ceremony was attended by distinguished people from International agencies, embassies, celebrities and girls from high schools and universities.

Here we see Beletshachew, our Hamlin Reintegration and Rehabilitation Manager speaking during the award ceremony.



Friends for Life

Over 50 years ago Biru, when a young lad, started working as a gardener for the Hamlin's and he is a faithful friend to this day.



He knew the Hamlin's when they first came to Ethiopia to work in the Princess Tsehai Hospital and with dedication he has continued to care for Dr Hamlin since those early days. After the death of Dr Reg. Hamlin, Biru knelt down beside her, took her hand and kissed it. He said, "Don't leave us, we'll help you". She says that because of his support she knew that she would be 'quite all right'. Biru still helps Dr Hamlin at the Addis Ababa

Fistula Hospital. Every morning he will go to her house and open the windows. During the day he is around to attend to any jobs that need doing and at night he visits again to close the windows and make a fire.

What a joy it is to report on two happy celebrations:

(I) Culture Day at Midwifery College

The College celebrates 'Culture Day' every year with colourful cultural activities. Many people were there to join in the celebrations. All the students were dressed in colourful attire and



were a joy to look at. In his opening speech, Ato Zelalem, Dean of the college, said, "Today is a party day for all of us where we take a break from the routine educational tension - and relax. It is a big day for us to show our beauty as a nation. We represent the little Ethiopia of our College as we are all from diverse ethnic groups.



The day was packed with many activities - cultural dance and music, games and a beauty contest for 'Miss Hamlin'. The contest was so tough that we all came to understand that the young girls we train are not just skilled midwives, but have a gifted talent in dancing and modelling.

A first-year student won the competition and was crowned Miss Hamlin and she will hold the crown until our next cultural day”.

(2) Wetet Abay Health Centre



This centre where some of our deployed midwives are working has celebrated the building of a modern maternity ward to improve maternal and child healthcare services in the district. Ato Zelalem said that the construction of this ward will have enormous benefit to the community, particularly in reducing child and maternal mortality in the area.

Ato Tilahun (*Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia's operations manager*) said that this new maternity block will enable expectant mothers to have access to quality antenatal and postnatal care, and this will subsequently lead to the decrease in infant mortality, maternal deaths and reproductive health issues.

A representative from the local Health Bureau indicated that Wetet Abay district has achieved great results in the reduction of maternal mortality in spite of challenges related to space, healthcare resources and mothers living in far and hard to reach areas.

Dr Hamlin has often said, “Midwives are our fistula prevention strategy. If a woman in labour has a skilled experienced midwife by her side, then obstructed labour can be identified, obstetric fistula prevented and so many maternal deaths avoided. My goal for the future is to provide a Hamlin Midwife for every village in Ethiopia”.

Sad News from UK.

It is with sadness that we report the death of our office manager, Tony Legg. Many of you had spoken to him when phoning and visiting the office. He had worked faithfully for us for 20 years and had visited the hospital in Addis Ababa on two occasions. Anything we asked him to do was done quietly and efficiently. We shall miss him very much.

Finally, on behalf of the women and babies in Ethiopia we at **Hamlin Fistula UK** thank you for your support.



John Chassar Moir was a professor of obstetrics and gynaecology in Oxford who achieved distinction for his repair of vesico-vaginal fistulae. He wrote: *No branch of surgery calls for greater resource, never is patience so sorely tried and never is success more dependent on the exercise of constant care both during operation and even more perhaps, during the anxious days of convalescence. But never is the reward greater.*

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.

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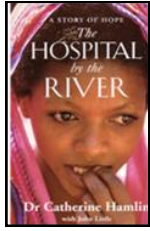
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