



Hamlin Fistula UK

Supporting the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital in Ethiopia

Charity
Number:
1153053

Newsletter April 2017

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



Drs Reginald and Catherine Hamlin worked at the Princess Tsehai Hospital in Addis Ababa when they first arrived in Ethiopia. On one occasion Dr Hamlin said, “My husband and I were touched and appalled by the sadness of our first fistula patient, a beautiful young woman in urine-soaked ragged clothes, sitting alone in our outpatients department away from the other waiting patients. We knew she was more in need than any of the others. She had been through a long labour of five days with only the village women to help. And so we saw the first of many fistula sufferers”.

Since those early days Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia has grown in a tremendous way. In addition to our main hospital in Addis Ababa we now have five regional hospitals strategically placed around the country offering fistula surgery for the most marginalised women in the world, such as this one patient whom Dr Hamlin remembers. We also have the Re-integration and Rehabilitation Centre at Desta Mender and the Hamlin Midwifery College. Our Hamlin Midwives are now working in thirty two government clinics around the country and with their help our hope is that fistula injuries will be eradicated in Ethiopia.

A message from our CEO.

Dear friends, greetings to you all from Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia headquarters here in Addis Ababa. With your help we have continued to provide compassionate loving and tender care to thousands of women, and in the year ahead, we will continue to treat patients with obstetric fistula, prevent further childbirth injuries and rehabilitate patients with serious injuries. Please

let me encourage you to count the blessings in your life every day. We live in a world that needs hope. May we all be ever mindful of this as we continue with our caring love and support and may we continue together to eliminate fistula from Ethiopia and beyond. Sincerely, Tesfaye Yacob (M.D.)



(An obstetric fistula is an internal injury caused by an obstructed labour during childbirth, leaving the mother with injuries so severe that it renders her incontinent of urine, and sometimes bowel contents as well. They become isolated because of the offensive smell that surrounds them. As well as having this humiliating condition, most have to live with the sadness of having delivered a stillborn baby.)

One Patient's Story

As a young girl Habtam loved going to school so much that she would walk an hour every morning to the school house.



One day she realized that she had left a book at home and decided to run back for it during a break from her lessons. She was met on the way by an older man she didn't know, he raped and beat her and left her on the roadside. She struggled to reach home, devastated and unable to return to school. She became depressed and didn't want to interact with friends and family, despite their loving support,

so she isolated herself from her society. It wasn't until Habtam was feeling ill that the family realized her trauma had left more than emotional scars. She was pregnant. She was ashamed, and hid herself even from her family. She often thought of suicide so she could end the pain in her life.

Her baby boy was born alive, but the labour was traumatic. She developed a double fistula, so she was incontinent of urine and bowel contents. She lived once again in isolation, this time for four years. Finally an aunt brought Habtam to our Hamlin Fistula centre in Yirgalem where she has had successful rectal surgery. Surgery to correct her urinary incontinence is scheduled soon. Habtam said,



"In the years I spent at home I felt that continuing to live made no sense. There was no point in being alive when suffering from such horrible injuries. Also, it made me sad that it was not possible for me to continue my education. Now, thanks to this hospital and the care of the loving staff, my self-confidence has returned and I have started planning for my future". She is receiving holistic care and support and we are hoping that her second surgery will also be successful to enable her to return home with her dignity restored.

The 'Catherine Hamlin' ferry.



A brand-new ferry bearing the name of Dr Hamlin has arrived in Sydney Harbour, Australia, from Hobart, Tasmania, where the ship was built. "It is really lovely to know that so many people have tremendous love for our work and for our patients," said Dr Hamlin, in a statement about the ferry naming. "I hope that this will draw the attention of the world to this great need in Ethiopia for maternal healthcare. I want to help these women. I know you would all be touched if you could see them in their plight. Thank you for your support. Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia's life-changing treatment is provided free of charge to patients, thanks to the generosity of donors around the world." *(Dr Hamlin was born in Australia.)*

New Operating Theatres

Towards the end of last year the operating theatres at our main hospital were completely refurbished and a C-arm machine is soon to be installed. This will give the surgical team access to high quality digital imaging and enable more complex surgery to take place, significantly increasing the possibilities for more patients.

The fistula problem continues. Our main hospital in Addis Ababa and our five regional centres have all been busy treating the many fistula patients who continue to arrive with these

devastating birth injuries. All of our six hospitals are also providing safe birthing facilities where former patients can return for a Caesarean section delivery, free of charge.

Solar Suitcases - Women No Longer Labour in Darkness.

Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia has distributed more than 162 solar suitcases to remote health centres in four regions (Oromiya, Amhara, Tigray, and SNNP) to enable safe and prompt delivery services at night. This project has been funded by **Greenlamp**. A reliable light source is one of the things often lacking in clinics in remote areas, forcing midwives to resort to the use of torches and kerosene lamps. The inconveniences and health risks associated with these lighting sources in general are compounded when assisting mothers to deliver babies.



The solar suitcases facilitate timely and appropriate emergency care, reduce maternal and infant morbidity and mortality, and improve the quality of care in the clinics. Without good lighting, it is extremely difficult to conduct safe deliveries, suture areas of bleeding, and resuscitate babies. “With the solar suitcases, health providers can see at

night for routine deliveries, and can promptly diagnose and treat birth complications,” said Ato Abebayehu H/Selassie, Solar Suitcase Project Coordinator at HFE, adding that lack of light may lead to the loss of a baby’s or a mother’s life, or both. “So far we have helped benefit nearly 30 thousand mothers, well over our target for the 2016 fiscal year. Although we have made significant progress toward reaching our goal, there are still many more mothers and newborns who can benefit from the solar suitcases,” he added. “They have significantly addressed the electricity problem in the health centres and transformed the night time care,” said, Dr. Tesfaye, adding that plans are underway to distribute more to other remote healthcare centres.

Up-date on a dear long-term in patient

In the October 2013 issue of our newsletter we featured a patient who had arrived severely malnourished and having multiple childbirth injuries. She was treated as an outcast in her village because she smelled, and she felt ashamed. “I used to cry day and night, I didn’t want to eat or drink because I didn’t want to live, and I didn’t want to leak.” She underwent



several operations at the Addis hospital and is now working at Desta Mender, our rehabilitation and reintegration centre. Here is her picture now - transformed into a beautiful young lady with a mission in life.

UK Trustee Visits Hospital.

In January this year Brian Taylor visited the hospital in Addis Ababa with fellow chaplain Rev. Mark Stobert to help with training in Reflective Practice.



Brian reports: It was great to be able to show Mark this wonderful place and wonderful country. We delivered training and provided support to staff as they transform the lives of so many women who have been blighted by childbirth injuries. Many thanks to Mark who brought his compassion and expertise in Reflective Practice to the hospital. I would like also to pass on so many thanks to the wonderful people who are employed here and who dedicate their lives to this

work every day. Dr Tesfaye, the CEO; Dr Fekade, the medical director, Fikirte, whose quiet efficiency and profound compassion never ceases to amaze; Zenebe, the hospital chaplain, the wonderful nursing, rehab and reintegration staff, the cooks, drivers and gardeners and others who are too numerous to name but together make a community of healing and hope to all they meet. Many thanks also to "Hamlin Fistula UK", of which I am part, who funded and sponsored this work.

Please remember to visit our website at www.hamlinfistulauk.org where we give an overview of the hospital and its founders, Dr's Reg and Catherine Hamlin. Dr Catherine Hamlin is now 93 and still lives in her home on the hospital compound. She is a much loved and revered person in both the Hamlin Fistula organisation and in the whole of Ethiopia.

Mr Clive Hewitt

It is with sadness that we report the death on 27th February of our honorary President.

Clive was first appointed a trustee in April 1990 and he held the position of Honorary Treasurer until 2007 when he stepped aside to enable younger trustees to become involved. He was the driving force behind the UK charity and he visited the hospital in Addis Ababa 4 times each year for many years to help in the finance department, such was his dedication to the cause. He always maintained a very close interest in the work of Dr Hamlin and the Hamlin Fistula organisation and was an active fund-raiser for more than 20 years. Shortly after Clive



became Treasurer the UK charity received a huge surge of interest following the broadcast of 2 documentary films on the BBC I television programme series 'QED'. After the first film was broadcast the Birmingham practice of Chartered Accountants (where Clive was a senior partner) came to a standstill because all the administrative staff were enlisted to open and deal with the vast amount of mail arriving daily by the sack-load. He was heavily involved in the development of Yirgalem Outreach Hospital and the UK Trust continues this association by financing the running costs of the centre. We shall all miss Clive as a dear friend and as a conscientious contributor to our Hamlin Fistula UK charity.

May 23rd is United Nations'

"INTERNATIONAL DAY TO END OBSTETRIC FISTULA"

Fistula has virtually been eliminated in most high and middle income countries around the world, so we know that it can be eliminated in every country.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon

Here at the Hamlin organization we celebrate this sentiment every day!

Fistula is a terrible condition that affects more than two million women around the world. There are thousands of cases each year in Ethiopia alone. They were horribly injured for simply trying to bring a child into the world. Many women die from their injuries and the misery of those who survive is profound.

To quote Dr Hamlin: "These women have suffered more than any woman should be called upon to endure. To meet only one is to be profoundly moved and calls forth the utmost compassion that the human heart is capable of feeling"

Today you can help change tomorrow for women suffering from this humiliating condition. Please help us to end fistula by donating to us at **Hamlin Fistula UK**. We can't do it without you!



We at HFUK thank you for your continuing support.

Dr Hamlin and her staff are appreciative of all we do and she says, "Treating a woman with fistula gives back a life and also a mother, a wife, a daughter and a productive member of society. Life with fistula is not much of a life at all".

In their first hospital Dr Hamlin would often say, "When fistula patients turned up at out-patients they would be pushed to the end of the line. My husband, Reg. would go to them, put his arms around them and say, "You are the most important to me today. I will see you first".

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.

A direct gift of cash

A regular gift by 'standing order'

A gift by CAF cheque

Payroll giving

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 Company Secretary

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**.

Cheque attached £.....

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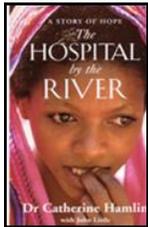
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£5 each (if collected from office) or by post **£8 each**

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Dr Hamlin's second Book "Catherine's Gift"
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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 -4 copies for £5**

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Remember to say you are supporting **“Hamlin Fistula UK”** - every purchase makes a contribution to the Charity with no additional cost to yourselves. Do investigate it.