



Hamlin Fistula UK

Supporting the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital in Ethiopia

Charity
Number:
1153053

Newsletter January 2019

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



Report on our 50th Celebration Day

20th October 2018

Our celebration day was enjoyed by everyone who attended and we all learned more about the Hamlin Fistula organisation as the various speakers gave their presentations.

We were fortunate and delighted to have two visitors from Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia with us, Zelalem Belete, Dean of the Hamlin Midwifery College and

Zenebe Mesfin, Chaplain to all patients and staff at the Hamlin organisation in Ethiopia. Malcolm, our Chairman, welcomed attendees and introduced the speakers.

Dr Peter Jackson.

First we heard from Dr Peter Jackson from UK who enlightened us on the early years of Drs, Reginald and Catherine Hamlin in Ethiopia, as he knew them before the UK Trust came into existence.

Peter was employed by the Haile Selassie Medical School while working in the Princess Tsehai Memorial Hospital in Addis Ababa when the Hamlins first arrived in Ethiopia. He said that in those early days there were no disposable gloves or intravenous cannulas, etc, and ether was used as an anaesthetic. With ether, he told us, there was a risk of explosions -fortunately there were none! Haile Selassie was a frequent visitor to the Princess Tsehai Memorial Hospital when friends and family were sick and it was at these times that the Hamlins met and became friendly with the Emperor.

Peter added that soon after the Hamlins arrived, he and his wife were celebrating the birth of their baby boy. The Hamlins went to visit them and asked what the baby's name was. The Jackson's hadn't given him a name at that point so Catherine said, "I think Simon is a nice name," and so they named him Simon.

Some 40 years later Peter made a return visit to see Dr Hamlin and he said she welcomed him as though they had never been apart.

BBC QED documentary film, "Walking Back to Happiness"

We had permission from the BBC to show the film "Walking Back to Happiness" telling of the early years of the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital.

Zenebe Mesfin and Rev. Brian Taylor.

Our trustee Brian, who is a retired hospital chaplain, interviewed Zenebe on his work as chaplain for the Hamlin Fistula organisation in Ethiopia.

Zenebe said that whatever their religion, he is there to help the patients in their time of spiritual need and that the most frequently asked questions they ask are, “Why me? Why has God cursed me?” He tells them that it is not their mistake and that God has not cursed them. It is because of the lack of sufficient medical facilities in the country and in fact, God has had a hand in leading them to this hospital where they will receive help and love and compassion.

Coffee ceremonies are important occasions to Ethiopians and Zenebe told us that he holds one of these each week in the classroom where patients have their lessons. Patients come and express their worries and fears in a relaxed atmosphere as they often arrive at the hospital with anxieties and psychological problems as well as their health issues. Zenebe talks to them about God and tells them a bible story. He says it is lovely to see happy patients go home and to see many return a year or two later to have their next baby – “This leaves me with a ‘wow’ factor” he said.

Dr John Woolley.

John has been a friend of Hamlin Fistula UK for many years and has visited the hospital in Addis Ababa. The story he told us today was of the Hamlin hospital, its patients and staff from the early days.

He was there in Addis when discussions were taking place of building a village where patients could live who were not able to return home because of their severe childbirth injuries and of the need for them to have life-changing surgery. John was taken to see the land just outside Addis Ababa where subsequently Desta Mender (meaning Joy Village) was built and where a few years later the Midwifery College was built. This was a good introduction to the presentation by the Dean of the Midwifery College, Zelalem Belete.

Zelalem Belete

Zelalem first thanked the UK Trust for its 50 years of unflagging support of the Hamlin organisation.

He said Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia has an ambitious vision: A world without maternal death, birth injuries or obstetric fistula. There are 'Three Pillars of Hamlin' helping towards this goal, 1) Treatment : 2) Rehabilitation and Reintegration : 3) Prevention.

Of course, prevention is better than cure and Zelalem is working to help many students reach their goal of graduating with a BSc degree in Midwifery. He teaches the importance of compassionate and respectful care of all mothers, and students must have managed at least 40 deliveries during their training. They are accompanied by instructors when out on clinical practice and many have reached a total of 100 deliveries before graduation, so they are well equipped to go out to work in the rural areas of Ethiopia. Once in the countryside they also provide family planning services and go into schools teaching the students the pitfalls of early marriage. 125 Hamlin Midwives have been deployed into 65 health centres. They are the best trained midwives in the whole of Ethiopia.

The College is now providing ultrasound training and work is in progress of enabling students to study for a Masters Degree in the future.

So, what of the future of Hamlin Fistula UK?

Our Chairman, Malcolm reports on the future our Charity.

HFUK, I am delighted to say, is in good heart and spirit. For a small charity, we have a good set of assets. We have explained to the Charity Commissioners that the interest from our investments pays for the running costs of the hospital in Yirgalem and they were quite happy.

I remember when Yirgalem was opened and Clive, our previous Chairman, said in his speech that we would fund the hospital 'in perpetuity'. That is a very English expression and because he could see the puzzled faces of the Ethiopian audience,

he quickly explained it meant for ever.

We also pay for medicines for the hospitals that can't be obtained in Ethiopia. In general, two suppliers are used, one in London and one in Ireland. The Charity Commissioners like this arrangement because whilst the goods go directly to Ethiopia, we pay the bill to London or Ireland and there is no problem about money laundering.

We also collect a large number of blankets from women's groups all over the country. We send out about 4000 blankets a year and Matron says she makes use of them all. For many women they are the only possession they have and when they return to their villages they act as an advertisement for the hospital.

We pay for things that are sudden and unexpected requests. Two years ago we paid for a number of laptops that the final year students at the College could use together with other equipment that was needed. We buy nurses watches for all the graduates from the College. In the past we have helped with the cost of a Guest House at Metu and have purchased general equipment for the hospital. We have funded training for the Finance Manager and for other members of staff.

We have just agreed to pay for the refurbishment of the Guest House in the grounds of the hospital in Addis. We have suggested, rather tongue in cheek, that when it is finished it should be named Britannia House- we will see!

So we are doing our bit. But therein lies the problem. As prices increase we are in a situation where our income from investments, from those who fund us generously each month, from legacies and for talks, is no longer enough. At the present rate of expenditure we will soon have to start selling our assets to meet the needs of the hospital thus decreasing our investment income. We have taken the decision, therefore, to explore the possibility of employing a professional fundraiser to tackle the business world. It will in the first instance be for a six month period, after which we will review where we are and what has been achieved. In this connection, I pay tribute to our Australian partners who very successfully

use a professional fund raiser. They are helping us with potential names of suitable applicants as well as job descriptions.

The Midwifery College has welcomed another 20 new students.

Following the tough screening process, the Hamlin College of Midwives has welcomed another 20 young girls for the 2018/19 academic year. The new students were selected from rural high schools in four regions where the community demands a midwifery service. Based on the college criterion all the girls scored enough pass points in the National Government Universities Entrance Exam and were outstanding performers in their respective high schools.



After completing registration, the students spent the first two introductory weeks learning the college's culture and principles, visiting the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital as well as having a city tour of the major shopping centres and tourism sites. Such a

welcoming ceremony is uncommon for higher institutions other than Hamlin.

“I found it more than what I expected” says Tsinat, one of the new comers from East Ethiopia around the Harar Hamlin Fistula Centre. “The college is a breath-taking site, with its highly equipped classrooms, the excellent meal service and the motherly care of the housemothers; I heard about the status of government universities in the country but Hamlin is different. I am so happy to join Dr. Catherine’s lifetime vision and I am now very passionate to contribute my part”.

The new students have currently started their freshman regular classes and the tight competition among the twenty outstanding young girls to win the Hamlin Medal after four years has already begun. And just like their senior students, they will finish as skilled midwives and make a difference in the maternal healthcare service of rural Ethiopia.

Second year Student, Rahmet Kedir.

One of our 2nd year midwifery students is Rahmet Kedir. Rahmet is now 18 and was born and raised at Yayo, a small rural city close to our Metu Hamlin Fistula Centre. Rahmet's education has always been excellent; she has always been top of her class right from Elementary to the completion of her High School education. It was this quality of education that enabled her win the free scholarship in midwifery provided by the Hamlin College of Midwives and she joined the college in 2017. Rahmet says, "Health education is my long-time dream. Here at Hamlin I am studying my dream and one of the best professions in the world. I am lucky to be at a college only for females, which is an advantage, so I can fully concentrate on my studies." The well-equipped facility and the curriculum with its greater focus on practical learning makes Hamlin advantageous over other colleges. Rahmet is a top-ranking student of her year.



“This place will go on for many years until we have eradicated fistula altogether – until every woman in Ethiopia is assured of a safe delivery and a live baby.” *Dr Catherine Hamlin.*



Dr Hamlin with two of her faithful members of staff who have worked alongside her for many years.

Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia is one of Africa’s success stories. Please help us to continue to keep the candle burning which Drs Reginald and Catherine Hamlin lit more than 50 years ago.

We at HFUK send you a big Thank You for your continuing support. We wish you all a Happy New year.

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Our Office is manned by our Company Secretary and volunteers and it is not open every day. If you need to contact us your message and telephone number can be left on our answer-phone and we will get back to you as soon as possible. Thank you for your cooperation.

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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.

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

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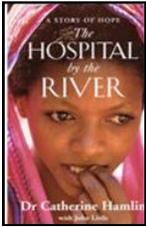
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