



Hamlin Fistula UK

Supporting the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital in Ethiopia

Charity
Number:
1153053

Newsletter July 2018

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



An Important Event is Planned in UK for 20 October 2018

Asfaw Nigussie (HFE finance manager) recently visited UK for specialist training. With Hamlin Fistula UK's 50th birthday fast approaching our UK board gave Asfaw a commemorative piece of local crystal-ware for him to present to Dr Hamlin in Ethiopia.

Asfaw handing the gift to Dr Hamlin



Just to whet your appetite we would like to bring to your attention that later this year Hamlin Fistula UK will be celebrating its Golden Jubilee - we will have been supporting Drs Reg and Catherine Hamlin and the fistula patients in Ethiopia for 50 years and helping Dr Catherine realise her lifelong dream of eradicating fistula from the country. This dream it is hoped will be realised before 2030. What once seemed impossible is now becoming a reality.

We are the longest serving charity supporting the work of Drs Reg and Catherine Hamlin and we have watched the main hospital in Addis Ababa grow from a small family-run unit to the centre of world-wide excellence it is today.

You, our supporters and donors, have been generous to us in many ways and it is with your help over all these years that Hamlin Fistula is what it is today. So thank you all for your on-going support.

Our next newsletter will contain more details of what is planned in Halesowen for this important event.

Sr Wude is promoted to Matron.

Sister Wude started her nursing career 27 years ago. She completed her studies in Cuba before working in a government hospital in her hometown of Bahir Dar, in the north of Ethiopia.



I studied nursing to realise my life dream of helping the poorest people in my community, especially women and children, so for me nursing is not just a profession but my passion that I am enjoying each day”

Sister Wude worked at Hamlin’s Bahir Dar Fistula Hospital for six years before moving to Addis Ababa, where she was a teaching instructor at the Hamlin College of Midwives and later started as a nurse at Hamlin’s Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital. With almost thirty years of experience Sister Wude has

worked across both government and private hospitals. Her broad experience means that she is a real asset to Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia and is firmly committed to Dr Catherine Hamlin's vision to eradicate fistula forever.

Sr. Wude says, "For me Hamlin is more than a workplace. It is rather the right place where I am exercising my lifetime dream of helping poor women of my country. Even after I received my postgraduate degree in a Masters of Public Health I have made no plan to leave Hamlin and the poor women eagerly in need of my help. Dr. Catherine has also influenced my family, my daughter is a doctor now and attending a specialisation program in obstetrics and gynaecology as she was inspired by Dr Catherine"

Sr Wude's wealth of experience working in both clinical and academic settings was recognised recently when she was promoted to Matron at our main hospital. She oversees a large team of staff and is responsible for the pre- and post-operative care of fistula patients. The patient-centred approach of the Hamlin Model of Care means each woman receives holistic treatment that mends more than her physical wounds. *"This helps to make my new responsibility achievable and I continue to exert my utmost skills and knowledge for the success of Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia"* Sr. Wude promised.

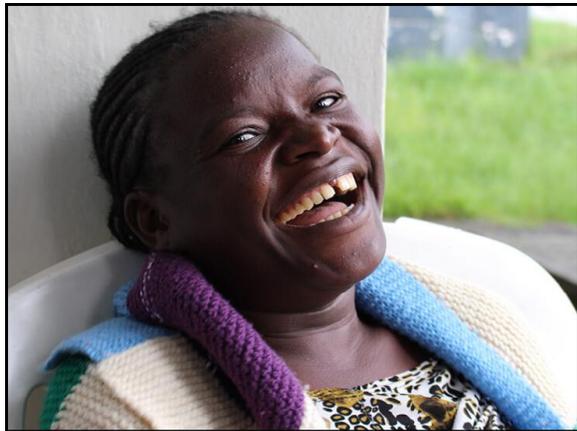
"Catherine always wants to know not only about the surgery, but about the patients and their stories."

Dr Fekade Ayenachew, Medical Director, Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia



We'd like you to meet Aster.

Aster sits in the post-operative ward at Hamlin's Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital, smiling and laughing along with other patients. Looking at her smiling face it would seem almost impossible to imagine that just a year earlier she had begged her despairing father for poison so she could end her life.



Aster's small farming village is among one of the most remote in Ethiopia. It is more than 1000 kms. south of Addis Ababa and lacks even the most basic of infrastructure. The closest health facility is more than two days walk away. During her pregnancy there was never any thought of Aster going to a hospital and when her labour began her family soon realised that

something was terribly wrong. After four agonising days Aster finally gave birth but her baby was stillborn. Aster, herself was barely alive. She was unconscious and was left with terrible injuries from her labour. Aster recalls, *"By the time I became conscious I found myself soaked, giving off a stench and not able to move my legs. I constantly cried and was ashamed of myself."* Even more tragically, as fistula had never been seen in her village before, Aster lived with the condition for two years. Then one fateful day she finally reached breaking point. *"One day I asked my father to bring me some poisonous drink and kill me. I told him this would be a relief for both myself and my family. He cried deeply and made me pray with him in seeking a solution."* Aster's father knew that his daughter couldn't continue living the way she was. He sold their only cow and helped Aster get to a health centre two-days walk away. She was immediately transferred to the Hamlin fistula hospital in Yirgalem. Her fistula injuries proved to be complicated. Aster required five months of care in Yirgalem before she was strong enough to be transferred to our main hospital in Addis Ababa for her first surgical procedure. She returned home to recover and three months later she returned to the hospital in Addis Ababa for her final operation. At last, after nearly three years of unimaginable suffering her life was

restored. Aster recalls the day she came home after her initial treatment.

“The villagers were surprised when I returned home looking so well. Above all my father cried with happiness. God helped me to get to the special hospital where I received such unconditional love and care for free.”

Today there are still women living in remote areas suffering in isolation from this preventable condition.

Update on Asrebeb

Do you remember reading about one special patient named Asrebeb?



She arrived at the hospital a few years ago very poorly. As well as her fistula injuries, she was severely malnourished and dehydrated and was unable to walk. With her own perseverance and the continual compassionate care of the staff she has improved

remarkably and is now learning life-skills under the guidance of Beletshachew at our rehabilitation centre at Desta Mender.

Surgical Advances and Urogynaecology Fellowship Programme.

Several women are arriving at our hospitals with urinary incontinence problems believing they have a fistula. On examination their problems are not related to fistula injuries but to other gynaecological disorders. In order to help these women Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia (in collaboration with Mekelle University, St Paul's Hospital Millennium Medical College and the Worldwide Fistula Fund) is carrying

out a Urogynaecology Fellowship Training Programme - the first of its kind in Ethiopia. It consists of three consecutive years of training in this field of medicine. The general objective is to train physicians who have the knowledge and expertise in the evaluation and treatment of women with pelvic floor disorders, reproductive organ and urinary system injuries and their complications.

Dr Fekade, (our Medical Director) and Dr Melaku (from our Hamlin Mekelle outreach hospital) were the first intake fellows and they graduated earlier this year.



Dr Fekade is seen here with Dr Renate Roentgen, a Fellowship Programme Director. Over recent years Dr Renate has been advising Dr Fekade and performing gynaecological operations on women with these problems.

Midwifery College

Tblets, aged 22 is from the Tigray area in Ethiopia's far north. She is in her fourth and final year of training at the Hamlin College of Midwives under the guidance of Ato Zelalem, the Dean of the college. When she graduates, she will return to

work in a remote area of the Tigray region to help prevent childbirth injuries.

Tblets says, *“I wanted to do this work to reduce the amount of maternal mortality and*



injuries in my country. Here it is a very high rate, too high. I want to help and it is thanks to Dr Hamlin that I am able to learn how to.” Tblets is one of 92 students currently studying at the college and has already delivered 32 babies, among them, a number of difficult breech births.

Zelalem believes the more difficult the cases students are involved with, the better prepared they will be when they finally return to their home areas. *“In Ethiopia, there are so few gynaecologists; a midwife has to serve as a gynaecologist, an obstetrician and a GP as well as a midwife, so they have to develop the kind of skills they need to handle all sorts of problems.”* After training for four years at the college they will be deployed to work in government run rural health centres helping prevent fistula and other serious birth injuries. They will also be able to refer women with previous injuries to trained doctors at the Hamlin Fistula hospitals around the country. When a Hamlin midwife joins a health centre, it has been found that fistula injuries plummet dramatically in surrounding villages.

Two midwives are working together in a clinic at Burussa Health Centre, located in Yayo, a small rural village in south-west Ethiopia. This clinic provides maternal care for the thousands of women living in the region. Burussa is supported by our outreach hospital in Metu, just 20 km away. When the clinic was first established they were having just four deliveries each month



due to a lack of skilled birth attendants and medical equipment. Four years later a Hamlin Midwifery Clinic was set up in the centre and since then the number of monthly deliveries has increased from four to 45. This is largely due to the incredible work of the two Hamlin midwives who were deployed to work at this clinic. The delivery room was renovated and essential medical supplies were brought in - what a difference this has made!



Martha, one of the midwives working here, said, “I am so happy that I am involved in providing such positive change in serving my own community, and that’s why I decided to stay beyond my initial deployment. I have no plans of leaving the clinic. Thank you for supporting my

studies and making me such a skilled midwife.”

A message from Dr Hamlin: Dear Friends, as each year passes we have much to be thankful for. Our work at the main hospital in Addis Ababa continues, our beds are always full and our staff is working with enthusiasm. Every day we see cured patients going home, and we compassionately tend to those who need further care and surgery. Our Minister of Health is behind all our work and he is confident that we will be able to eradicate fistula. He predicts a far earlier date than I do! There are still too many pregnant mothers delivering babies in their isolated homes where there is no help for an obstructed labour. I am encouraged by the many wonderful and dedicated people with whom we work. They are all so keen and working very hard to make positive change possible. I am very grateful for your support and send you my love.

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.

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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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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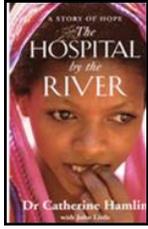
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