



Hamlin Fistula UK

Supporting the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital in Ethiopia

Charity
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England
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Newsletter April 2020



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

Happy Birthday Dr Hamlin.



A wonderful party was held in the grounds of the Hospital for Dr Hamlin as she celebrated her 96th Birthday. Congratulations!

(Dr Hamlin is seen here with Mamitu)



Dr Catherine Hamlin's work for obstetric fistula sufferers in Ethiopia has continued uninterrupted for more than half a century with more than 60,000 patients treated.

May 23rd is International Day to End Obstetric Fistula.

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, where obstructed labour will kill the mother and her baby. Those who survive are left with this injury, leaving her incontinent, isolated and ashamed. Some sufferers are both bladder and bowel incontinent. The misery is

profound. Added to this misery, the baby will be stillborn in nine out of ten women who survive the ordeal.

Dr Hamlin and her late husband Reg found the sad and dejected fistula women suffering in silence and alone when they first went to Ethiopia more than half a century ago. Dr Hamlin says she had wanted to eradicate obstetric fistula in Ethiopia in her lifetime.

“I won’t be able to achieve this now that I am an old woman,” says Dr Hamlin, “But you can achieve it in yours.” These young women have been horribly injured for simply trying to bring a child into the world.



If you wish to help us to fulfil this dream of Dr Hamlin’s, you may send donations to our Hamlin Fistula UK office, details are on page 8 of the newsletter. Thank you.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has designated 2020 as the International Year of the Nurse and Midwife.

This special year is to recognize the work of the world’s millions of nurses and midwives - including the life-saving work of our Hamlin midwives in Ethiopia. In the fiscal year of 2019 Hamlin midwives delivered over 30,000 babies.

Ultrasound.

Our Midwives are using ultrasound diagnostic machines to help in their examinations.

Sr. Hirut, midwife mentor based at Bahir Dar Hamlin Fistula Centre, together with four other midwives, has undertaken training in ultrasound diagnosis. On receiving their certificates they were provided with a portable and rechargeable ultrasound machine for regular use in their respective clinics.

We would like you to meet Dasash, a patient at Addis Betekristian government clinic in North Ethiopia. This is one of the Hamlin supported rural government clinics under the supervision of Bahir Dar Hamlin Fistula Centre. Dasash lives about one hour’s walking distance from the clinic. She is the mother of four children and is currently 7 months pregnant with her fifth child. Dasash was given an appointment to attend the clinic for an ultrasound test by Eleni, a Hamlin graduate midwife who has been working at this clinic for more than three years.

Sr Hirut and the driver from Bahir Dar Hamlin Centre headed to Addis Betekristian clinic,

which is about 80kms distance from Bahir Dar town, to meet Dasash and other appointed pregnant women waiting for the ultrasound service. The night before, Dasash said, “On my 3rd and 4th pregnancies I was referred to the Bahir Dar government hospital for the diagnosis. I had to walk for about two hours on foot to reach to the main road where I could get



transport, and then I had to pay bus fare for a journey of about 80kms to Bahir Dar. For a pregnant woman like myself that was so challenging and difficult. Now I am about to get the service right in my village. This is something I never thought would happen in my life and it means a lot to me. I have no uncertainties about my pregnancy now that I can access the ultrasound service. This is lifesaving and I would like to thank you that I am able to receive this service”.

Dasash was able to see her moving baby in the womb on the small screen of the machine. She was told that the foetus was healthy and in a good position.

Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia has pioneered this project which plays a decisive role in the prevention of fistula and other birth-related injuries. Many more organizations in Ethiopia want to replicate this project.



Midwife Eleni.

Eleni is one of the highly skilled Hamlin midwives who graduated in 2016. Since then, she has been serving at Qohar Mickael government clinic near to our Bahir Dar Hamlin Centre. She said, “I always wanted to study health and found Hamlin the right place to live out my dream. When I saw the college for the first time, it was more than I expected. The beautiful compound, well-equipped facility, the high standard of teaching aids and the committed teachers makes it an outstanding college”.

Eleni is working at the clinic with three more midwives, one of them is also Hamlin trained, and serving a population of over 37 thousand. It is Eleni and the other Hamlin graduate midwife who have been leading the midwifery service of the clinic for over four years now. They also manage some complications others couldn't handle. For instance, at the time we were interviewing Eleni, a woman in late labour arrived. She needed a forceps delivery but the ambulance was not available to refer her to our nearby hospital, so immediate action has to be taken. Eleni calmly took on the responsibility to deliver the baby. She applied every professional measure and successfully saved the life of both the mother and baby. They were soon referred to the government hospital for further help.

“Emaye” (Dr. Catherine) is my role model for the commitment I have now in serving the women in need in my profession. I recently became a mother too and felt the real pain, which I believe has doubled my passion as a midwife. I have completed my four year commitment with Hamlin but have no plan to leave.” Eleni.



Dr Binyam Sirak.

Dr Binyam is one of the youngest and is a most passionate surgeon, with a special interest for the Hamlin’s cause. (The reason may be that his father worked on the Desta Mender site before he was born.) Dr Binyam by profession is a fistula surgeon, a medical doctor, obstetrician and gynecologist and a fellow in Uro-gynaecology. He has served as a General Practitioner Instructor in Gynaecology at higher education level for the past 14 years. “Hamlin is now a centre of excellence in its holistic and patient-centred care. It is a well-structured and ever growing institution that grabs the interest of whoever, like myself, wants to learn more,” says Dr Binyam.

He also explains here his feelings regarding Dr Catherine. “The selflessness of the founders in establishing such a specialised centre for the marginalised women of my country is the inspiration behind wanting to help these women. It is more important than is my personal comfort. There is nothing that I would love more than to further progress up the ladder with Hamlin for the continuity of the Hamlin’s legacy. No words can explain my gratitude to both of them and I wish a long and healthy life to Dr Catherine.”

Jean (Trustee) reports: I was recently given a link to a UNFPA book called *Icons and Activists, Fifty Years of People Making Change*. I turned to the chapter headed: Making Motherhood Safe. On page 78 was this photo of Dr Hamlin and her message,



“My dream is to eradicate obstetric fistula in Ethiopia. I won’t eradicate it in my lifetime, but you can in yours”. The article continued - When Dr Hamlin and her husband left Australia for Ethiopia 60 years ago; they planned for a three year stint. Now, at age 95 (she has, of course, celebrated a birthday since the article was published) she continues her decades of work with the hospital she founded in Addis Ababa, the first there to specialise in treating obstetric fistula. Some 60,000 women have been treated at the hospital for this debilitating condition.

On another page was the following text and the accompanying photo: “When you have looked into the panic-stricken eyes of a woman dying on the labour-ward floor, then behind the numbers are the faces.”



A midwife, educator and epidemiologist, Dr Barbara Kwast was a pioneer in the global maternal health movement. At the WHO in 1987 she helped launch the global Safe Motherhood initiative. She has been instrumental in seeing the once-neglected issue become an international human rights, equality and social justice priority. Her research on the importance of competent, compassionate midwives and the root causes of maternal deaths has contributed to significant reductions in maternal mortality rates.

I’m sure you agree with me that celebrating their contributions as ‘change-makers’ is a fitting way to mark the 50th anniversary of UNFPA. They represent countless valiant others who have likewise made a difference. Their stories illuminate how far we have come – and how far we need to go. (Dr Barbara has been a faithful friend of Dr Hamlin for many years and has made a significant contribution to the Hamlin College of Midwives.)

Upon arrival at a Hamlin hospital, patients are embraced with tender loving care. They are given nutritious food, a handmade blanket and the empathy of staff – several of whom are cured fistula patients themselves. For many patients, this would have been one of the first instances of emotional and physical support since their injury. In some cases women have lived with the condition, untreated for more than 40 years, as our next story tells you.

Workinesh Simegn

Workinesh estimates that she is about 60 years old. She is a mother of four, living in a remote rural village in north Ethiopia, near to Gonder.

Following the birth of her 4th child some 30 years ago she faced a tragic health problem called pelvic organ prolapse (POP), a birth related problem and resulting in infection, bad smell and sometimes losing control of urine. “I have lived a long traumatic life for 30 years with this problem. I never thought it would be possible for me to be cured. Because of this big problem I got divorced, I left my children and I didn’t think it would be possible for me to have a normal life again. I



became a nun. *(In the Ethiopian Orthodox church, to become a nun is usually in older age when a woman ceases to live a married life and fully engages in religious practices)* I lived like that until now,” Workinesh recalls. So for almost 30 years Workinesh lived this spiritual life, praying, and was given the official religious title ‘Emahoy’. It is uncommon to see a woman become Emahoy at early age like Workinesh. This became a best way for Emahoy Workinesh to hide her health condition and she prayed to God for a cure. As well as treating fistula patients, HFE now includes treating women with prolapse. This can also be caused by a traumatic birth and also leaves them incontinent.

While in hospital patients receive a customised programme that includes nutrition, physiotherapy, counselling and rehabilitation. It is not just about repairing the injury, but restoring dignity.

A year ago, at the beginning of March 2019, a campaign for women with fistula injuries and POP was held in our Hamlin Fistula Centre in Bahir Dar. Women from around the area were identified. Thirty three poor rural women, including Workinesh, were screened for surgery and received treatment free of charge. Dr Bitew, senior Fistula Surgeon at Bahir Dar Hamlin Fistula centre, Dr. Yeshineh, a senior Surgeon from Addis Ababa, a surgical team from Spain and all the nursing staff at the centre fully participated in the programme. “We successfully completed the campaign with 100% success. The team also proved the quality treatment that HFE is known for and above all, we were happy to see the smiles of Workinesh and the other patients who were cured from the tragic life they had been living for years.” Dr Bitew said.

From time to time the same campaigns are undertaken at all of our outreach centres and will continue as planned. Because of this quality service, the government and Ministry of Health prefer these campaigns to take place at Hamlin facilities rather than elsewhere.

A Big Thank You To All Our Donors

2019 saw Hamlin Fistula UK fundraising in a big way and we want to thank all our donors who have given so regularly and generously for many years. Without your contributions we wouldn't have been able to help so many women in the Hamlin organisation. Thank you very much.

For the first time we entered The Big Give Christmas Challenge. Thank you to everyone who participated in this campaign. We are delighted to announce that we exceeded our target and raised a total of £9,511.

Here are some statistics about Ethiopia we would like to pass on to you:

- Population - over 114 million.
- Number of obstetricians—fewer than 325.

- Number of midwives - approx. 7,000.
- Over 80% of Ethiopia's population lives in remote rural areas with little or no access to maternal healthcare.
- Over 70% of women give birth without a doctor or nurse present.

This lack of health services has a devastating impact - approximately 11,000 women and girls die during childbirth or as a result of complications each year, and an estimated 1,500 survive but with an obstetric fistula.

Solution:

As well as the main hospital in Addis Ababa, Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia operates five regional hospitals in provinces where health services are very limited.

We in the UK support the Yirgalem hospital, Sidama Zone in the Southern Region. It is providing vital services to women living in remote rural communities to prevent and treat childbirth injuries. In 2019/20 we estimate that the hospital will have provided surgeries to over 400 women for fistula injuries, pelvic organ prolapse, caesarean section for past fistula patients and minor procedures including cystoscopy - a diagnostic procedure in the investigation of chronic pelvic pain.



Dr Hamlin's dream is to provide a midwife for every woman. It's a simple concept and one that we believe will make the biggest difference in finally eradicating fistula, forever. Under a midwife's care, problems can be identified early and their work can be the difference between life and death. Since 2007, 145 midwives have graduated from the Hamlin College of Midwives and they are now working in 65 rural midwifery clinics. These are in quite close proximity to our regional fistula hospitals for times when referrals are needed. Over the past three years Hamlin midwives have delivered over 40,000 babies and saved many mothers from suffering an obstetric fistula, as well as preventing hundreds of maternal and neonatal deaths.



We would like to send you news about our work, fundraising activities and ways to get involved. Please let us know (by email) if you are happy to hear from us by email. (If you change your mind about hearing from us you can stop receiving our updates at any time by emailing info@hamlinfistulauk.org or calling 0121 5593999

Hamlin Fistula UK hopes that you find our reports on the hospital very encouraging, and we thank you for your continuing support.

For anyone wishing to donate, please see pages 8 & 9 below. Thank you.

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.

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.

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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A regular gift by 'standing order'

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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 £.....

Title..... Forename(s).....

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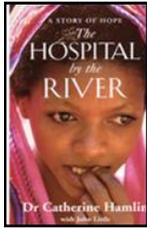
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Collections: 0121 559 3999

Orders by post will be despatched on receipt of payment



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

Qty:Book(s) @ £8.00 (within UK) £



Dr Hamlin's second Book "Catherine's Gift"
£2.50 each (if collected from office) or by post £5.50 each

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Notelets **£2.50 per pack of 6 (if collected from office)**

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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.