



**Hamlin Fistula UK**

Supporting the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital in Ethiopia

Charity  
Number:  
1153053

Company Limited  
by Guarantee  
Registered in  
England  
No: 08457433

**In Loving Memory**



## **We Remember the Saint of Addis Ababa**

**The saint of Ethiopia has died.  
24th January 1924 - 18th March 2020**



We mourn the death of Dr Catherine Hamlin, the world’s most renowned obstetrician and gynaecologist. In many countries as well as in Ethiopia she was regarded as one of the most experienced fistula surgeons of the modern world.

People around Addis Ababa have been saying for many years, “Ah! Dr Hamlin - we think of her as Mother Teresa, she has been so kind to us,” and “Catherine Hamlin - she is a woman who is so good, so good. She is a saint.”

In January we were celebrating the 96th Birthday of Dr Catherine Hamlin. Now, sadly we report that the ‘Saint of Addis Ababa’ has died. She restored dignity and hope to Ethiopian women for six decades.

Dr Elinor Catherine Hamlin AC, MBBS, FRCS, FRANZCOG, FRCOG

She was born in Australia, one of six children and the child of Elinor and Theodore Nicholson, but her life’s work was in Ethiopia.

Catherine and her late husband Reginald met and married when they were both working at Crown Street Women’s Hospital in Sydney, Australia. Catherine was a resident in obstetrics and Reginald was the medical superintendent.

In 1959 their adventurous spirits inspired them to accept a three year contract with the

Ethiopian Government to work as obstetricians/gynaecologists and set up a midwifery school in Addis Ababa.

While working in the Princess Tsehai Memorial Hospital Drs Reginald and Catherine Hamlin asked about the young women waiting to be seen in out-patients. A fellow gynaecologist confided, *“The fistula patients will break your heart but there is nothing we can do for them.”* The Hamlins soon developed a modern surgical technique to close obstetric fistula injuries. Their procedure has since been taught to doctors all over the world.

Dr Catherine often told the story of the first patient they operated on, *“She was just a little girl, 16 or 17 who’d endured an obstructed labour for five days and delivered a stillborn child, tearing a hole between her birth canal and bladder, leaving her leaking urine uncontrollably. She sat in out-patients, expecting to be seen last, because she was smelling badly .... Reginald made a great fuss of her, and she was the first patient we cured. Of course that was a wonderful moment, being able to send her home in a new dress with hope in her heart. That was what made me realize we were in Ethiopia for a purpose.”* Within three years they had operated on three hundred such fistula patients.

As news of a cure spread, many came seeking treatment. To cater for the demand they decided what was needed was a hospital dedicated to helping these poor fistula patients. And so began their fundraising.

**They officially opened the Addis Ababa  
Fistula Hospital in 1974.**



For more than sixty years Dr Catherine dedicated her life to helping the most marginalised women in Ethiopia. Reginald died in 1993 but Catherine never doubted the work they began must continue. When

describing the lives of her patients she was often heard to say,

*“Our patients have faced agonising journeys to get here from remote areas, including a typical two-day walk to the nearest road followed by lengthy travel by bus; a labour of four, six or even seven days followed by a stillbirth and the devastating injuries caused by obstructed labour”.*

Dr Catherine’s strength in the face of adversity is inspiring. She has never faltered in her mission to help fistula sufferers, regardless of personal or national upheaval – the hospital doors always stayed open.

There was the fall of supporter and dear friend Emperor Haile Selassie in 1974, the military coup and bullets from warring factions that peppered the wall of their house, there was a civil war for 17 years, the “Red Terror” slaughter of up to 500,000 opponents of the new Communist government in the late '70s; and terrible famine during the '80s. Everyone saw what an incredible job the Hamlins were doing and simply left them alone.



*Drs Reg & Catherine with some of the staff employed at the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital when it first opened. .*

Since the beginning of the Hamlins work in Ethiopia the patients have been arriving at the Fistula Hospital seeking help from the dedicated doctors and staff, both previous and present, their bodies and spirits broken by these devastating injuries. Here they are helped to return to a normal life. Wearing urine-soaked clothes, each of them walks into the special hospital and is able to walk out wearing a new dress and a warm colourful shawl around her shoulders. This is one of the most moving experiences one could hope to see.

When the young women have been treated, they either need to stay for further rehabilitation or are free to return home. Dr Catherine Hamlin would describe this moment, *“We don’t just say to them now you are cured, just go out of the gate and you will be alright. They wouldn’t know where to go. They wouldn’t have money to get home. So twice a week we take them in our vehicles, in our Land Rover or a 4-wheel drive, up to the market area where the buses leave and we pay their fares back to their villages.”*



More than 60,000 women of all religions and backgrounds have had their health and dignity restored free of charge since the hospital opened.

Dr Hamlin lived most of her life in her house in the grounds of her Fistula Hospital She was adored by her patients, her staff and the Ethiopian people. In later years she was frequently referred to as “Emaye” meaning Mother. Dr Hamlin committed her life to, and spent her life’s work treating thousands of women, and changing their lives for the better.

Thanks to the Hamlins, Addis Ababa has become the world's headquarters for fighting fistula.

The first meeting of the International Society of Obstetric Fistula Surgeons was held there in 2008.

Dr Catherine was most proud of her Hamlin Model of Care – holistic healing that is part of every patient's treatment. *"We don't just treat the hole in the bladder, we treat the whole patient with love and tender care, literacy and numeracy classes, a brand-new dress and money to travel home."*

If Ethiopians ever forget what fistula is, one woman they can thank is Dr. Catherine Hamlin, an Australian, and a Christian, who in 1974 opened the first fistula hospital in Addis Ababa with her late husband Reginald.

*All of this happened because Dr Catherine Hamlin had a life-changing idea ..... to eradicate fistula forever.*

As well as the Hamlin Fistula Hospital in Addis Ababa, there are also five small outreach hospitals strategically placed around Ethiopia, a Rehabilitation Centre helping women to learn life-skills by which they can earn money and so enable them to become self-sufficient, and a Midwifery College to help in the prevention of these injuries.



The Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital has become a world centre for fistula treatment, rehabilitation, training and prevention. Dr. Hamlin's work put obstetric fistula on the world's health agenda, and her work has been internationally recognized by governments and professional medical societies around the world.

We thank everyone who has supported Dr Catherine Hamlin on this journey in helping to achieve her idea of a community where women of all backgrounds, who are ashamed and in despair, are welcomed with love and care.

Dr Hamlin was honoured to be nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize in 1999 and again in 2014.

In the final chapter of her book, 'The Hospital by the River' she says, *"I have come to the end of my story of the fistula pilgrims – a story that I leave others to continue*

and finish. Eventually, I hope they will be able to write that there is no longer a need for a fistula

hospital, as Ethiopia will have become a country where every woman can be assured of a safe delivery”.

“When I die, this place will go on for many, many years until we have eradicated fistula altogether – until every woman in Ethiopia is assured of a safe delivery and a live baby.”

Dr. Hamlin has trained many to carry on her important mission. At her 90th birthday party she told those who had gathered to celebrate the life of this remarkable woman: "We have to eradicate Ethiopia of this awful thing that is happening to women: suffering - untold suffering in the countryside. I leave this with you to do in the future, to carry on."

And so we continue to “carry on” her wishes. The world is more aware of the devastating effects of obstetric fistula because of her.



### What an amazing lady!



*When they had decided to stay in Ethiopia,  
Dr Reg Hamlin said these words.*

Dr Hamlin has written an inspiring memoir about her life's work to end fistula, "***The Hospital by the River: A Story of Hope***". There is also a collection of stories of hope about the people affected by Dr. Hamlin's work entitled "***Catherine's Gift***".

The books can be purchased from us - see page 9 below.



In 1968, here in the UK our charity was formed to raise money for this hospital and we have been supporting Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia ever since. All of our Trustees visit the hospital on a regular basis and have seen for ourselves the remarkable work of this special lady.

Her energy and unyielding will over the decades have resulted in the transformation of thousands of lives of Ethiopian women. Dr Hamlin has left behind a legacy of talent and ideas of how the organisation and her life's work should continue.

Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed says: *“Dr Hamlin and her husband gave us a lifelong lesson that heroism is saving human life, feeling humanity and standing by the marginalised”*



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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](mailto: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.

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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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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

Online donation through our secure website - just click on DONATE

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).....

Surname.....

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If you wish to Gift Aid this donation, please tick  and sign below

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I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax in the current tax year than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all of my donations; it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

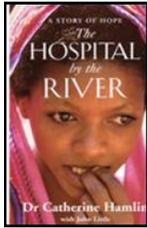
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## Merchandise for Sale

Please phone office to arrange time for personal

Collections: 0121 559 3999

Orders by post will be despatched on receipt of payment



Dr Hamlin's first Book "The Hospital by the River"  
**£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**

Qty: .....Book(s) @ £8.00 (within UK) £ .....



Logo Lapel Pin

**£1 each (if collected from office) or by post in multiples of 4 pins at £5**

Qty: .....packs of 4 pins @ £5 (within UK) £.....



Hamlin Fistula Key Ring 2 cm diameter.

**£1 each (if collected from office) or by post in multiples of 4 rings at £5**

Qty: .....packs of 4 rings @ £5 (within UK) £.....



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

or **by post in multiples of 4 packs of 6 at £12**

Qty: ..... packs of 6 notelets @ £12 (within UK) £.....



**“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**

Qty: ..... X 4copies @ £5



**Bookmarks**

50p each or **by post – up to 15 bookmarks please add £1**

Qty: .....@ 50p each plus £1 p&p - for up to 15 bookmarks  
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Instead of going directly to eBay, etc. find the retailer through [easyfundraising.org.uk](http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk)

Click on it and shop.

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.