



**Hamlin Fistula UK**

**Newsletter January 2014**

Charity  
Number:  
1153053

Supporting the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital in Ethiopia

## **A message from Dr Catherine Hamlin**

To my dear friends and supporters, I wish you all a Happy New Year. I have enjoyed a holiday in England with my family, and Martin Andrews our CEO, has also had a holiday with his family. We left the hospital in the good hands of Medical Director, Dr Fekade. Dr Fekade has previously run our Yirgalem Fistula Centre in the south of the country, where he worked for several years building up an excellent, busy centre. Now that he is in Addis Ababa, we are short of a permanent doctor in Yirgalem, but hope to find a replacement soon. There are so



**A legendary lady who has worked her heart out for Ethiopian women and girls for over half a century.**

few fistula surgeons who want to work away from Addis Ababa. This is indeed quite a worry. Fistula surgery is not a specialty that is popular and it is always associated with poverty.

I am excited about the good work our graduated midwives are doing in the countryside. Maternity patients likely to be in danger of obstructed labour are at times diagnosed before the labour starts and if possible can be taken to a hospital for a Caesarean. The problem is that there are

now so few skilled gynaecologists in Ethiopia, especially in remote areas where we plan to send our next midwifery graduates. A few weeks ago I heard from one of our good surgeons who left us to go to Swaziland. He said there are 11 other Ethiopian doctors in their small community. How sad that they had left their own country for a better salary, and what a loss for Ethiopia.

We now have quite a big ward for previous fistula patients, who come back to us for a Caesarean. At present there are two deliveries by Caesarean section in the post-op ward – a boy in one cot and a girl in another. Both happy mothers are delighted, as each had lost their first baby and developed a vesico-vaginal fistula. Both women have been cured and will be able to travel back home with joy in their hearts and a live baby each in their arms.

One day we hope for all our fistula hospitals to become maternity hospitals and that obstetric fistula will no longer be seen in Ethiopia – this is our dream! I hope some of you may see this happen, but I unfortunately will not. So in the meantime we still have much to do and more determination to press on with what at present seems an impossible goal to reach. It has been achieved in many countries and even in parts of Africa. Dr Andrew Browning tells me that where he is now in Tanzania, there are few fistula cases left. He would dearly love to come back to Ethiopia. At present he visits and is assisting in training our future fistula surgeons. We hope we can raise the money to allow him to return to us. I thank you and send my sincere good wishes and my love to you all. *Catherine Hamlin*

### ***Dr Fekade***

**Dr Fekade** is an experienced fistula surgeon with a true heart for our patients. This is not glamorous work but doctors like Fekade are the backbone of our organisation, restoring women to their full potential, training new surgeons, and doing it all with kindness.



### ***Desta Mender***

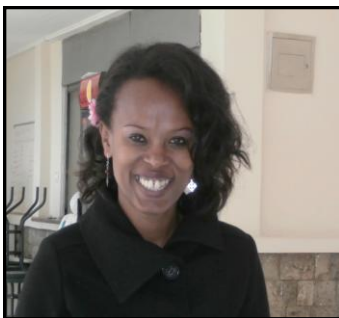
From time to time we have a few patients who are impossible to cure and we see the broken hearts that follow. This is a sorrow and a burden that many fistula

surgeons have to bear. Fortunately there is a lot we can do to bring a ray of sunshine to these patients as they go to our beautiful place called Desta Mender, a village where they can live and enjoy a community life and learn a skill to earn a living for themselves. Here we see some of the staff working with these women.

From left to Right, Beletshachew Tadesse (Manager of Desta Mender) Zuriashwork Aklilu (Reintegration Coordinator) Asfaw Abebe (Grounds Superintendent) and Gutu Soboka (Training and Development Officer)



**Zuriashwork** teaches patients life changing skills. Those patients who wish to learn about food preparation work with Zuriash in our Juniper Café. There is a whole new group of women running the café as the previous ones now have their own café outside in the community. They are very busy at weekends serving conferences, wedding receptions and the general public.



Zuriash goes out to the Dairy every day to help the women care for the cows at milking and feeding time and to teach them about managing the finances from the sale of milk.

She also supervises the women who are learning to sew. Some are making dresses and are already situated in an area where there are shops, so they do a good trade.

Zuriash goes out to see these women also.

**Tigist** teaches education in life skills to women who are preparing to leave Desta Mender and are becoming confident enough to make their own way in life. She teaches them about relationships and how to avoid HIV/Aids, how to set up a business, numeracy, literacy and craft skills.

## Loyal Members of our Staff



Our loyal staff helps to make the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital the long-term success it has been since 1974.

Pictured here is **Dasash**, she has been assisting in our operating theatre for more than 20 years.

Meet **Yetemwork**. She is a past patient who has worked in the Juniper Cafe at Desta Mender where we teach hospitality skills. She knows how to make Lamingtons and meat pies. Now she runs a little staff shop at the gates of the hospital selling chewing gum and sweets.



Thanks to generous donors we have an ambulance like this 4WD in each of our five regional fistula centres. These ambulances are also on call for our midwives in the field. Services like this are rare in Ethiopia.

Some women live with obstetric fistula for decades before they discover that there is a cure. One of our patients had lived in a convent for 40 years. She came to our hospital and we were able to help her – every life is worth restoring.



Next time you have to face "Mount Wash-more" remember the former obstetric fistula patients who are now employed in the laundry at the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital. There are mountains of sheets, blankets and theatre linen to wash and these ladies do it with a song and smile! (Photos by Tanya Seabrook)

Our  
indispensable  
laundry ladies



### **Hamlin Midwives**

Our Hamlin midwives run outreach education programs in regional Ethiopia. These are essential for teaching people in the community the real reasons behind the causes of obstetric fistula and how to



prevent it. They teach general family planning also. Education is so important!

*The midwifery students involved in a road accident —mentioned in the previous issue— are now fully recovered and are already busy with their studies.*

### **Birthing Kits Project**

Birthing kits are distributed to remote parts of the country where there is no access to a health facility and where almost all deliveries are supervised by traditional birth attendants.

HFE has started a local Kit Assembly Group and the project is run by volunteer staff that coordinates the project with the involvement of fifteen girls from the Rehabilitation and Reintegration Centre at Desta Mender. Twenty five thousand kits containing six basic components which are required for hygienic deliveries have been assembled.

### **Coffee Ceremonies**

In Ethiopia, the coffee ceremony is an integral part of social and cultural life. The ceremony takes place on a bed of scented grasses. Beans are roasted over charcoals and incense is usually burned during the ceremony. Imagine the aroma!



When the beans are ready, they are ground in a mortar before being placed in a coffee pot with boiling water. The coffee is served in china cups to family, friends and neighbours. Plenty of sugar is usually added and the coffee is often accompanied by foods including popcorn and cooked barley.

### **Story of Patients - Mother and Daughter**

Sometimes we have very young patients who have suffered injuries causing severe trauma. A three year old came to the hospital and Dr Hamlin performed her



surgery, she was cured and recovered well. Her mother was a patient in our hospital at the same time, waiting to give birth, so her daughter was able to stay with her mother in our waiting ward. Soon a baby girl was delivered safely and after a few days this little family was ready to return home.

### Hamlin Midwifery College

Prospective students have to pass two entrance examinations, our own College examination and the National University Entrance Examination. For the current academic year we have enrolled 21 new students, bringing our total to 89 students.



*Sr Addisalem Shetie and Sr.Yalemwork Kumlachew are two Hamlin midwives who graduated in October 2010. Since then they have been serving their community in Wotet Abay Health Centre in Bahir Dar. This is their story:*

Ayehune Tirualem is 30 years old and she developed problems at 34 weeks gestation. Fortunately her family brought her to our health centre as she needed immediate attention. We called the Hamlin Ambulance and had the patient transferred to Felege Hiwot Referral Hospital in Bahir Dar. After examination she was taken into theatre for a Caesarean section. Her family said that thanks to the midwives prompt and professional support both

mother's and baby's lives were saved. Ayehune Tirualem's husband is a priest in the locality. Since that day he has given speeches in his Church and at public gatherings about the good works of the Hamlin midwives and how they saved the lives of his wife and new baby.

*The Hamlin midwives in the Anbessame Health Centre are doing their best to help the mothers in that area. Their story begins here:*

Abeche Asnake is a 30 year old who has had two still births which happened due to home deliveries assisted by a Traditional Birth Attendant, so the current pregnancy was very special and precious for her and her family. After hearing about us she decided to attend antenatal care at our Health Centre. On her first examination we realised she was in fact post-term and that her date of delivery had passed, so we advised her to go to hospital. After the husband and the woman agreed, we organized transport and this mother gave birth to a live baby boy at the hospital. Later, after discharge, she spoke to people in her Church, saying, "I have a live baby because of the Hamlin midwives and if I hadn't followed their advice I would probably have had the same outcome as my previous pregnancies. I thank God for bringing these midwives to this village and I give thanks to the people who have trained and sent them to work in our vicinity."

*Our 3rd story comes from Birakat Health Centre, which is one of the deployment areas in Amhara Region.*

Banchiamlak is living in a small village called Birakat in which two of the Hamlin midwives are deployed. This patient has a history of repeated abortions due to unknown reasons. Because of her previous problems she was concerned regarding the outcome of this pregnancy too. One day she heard about the Hamlin midwives and this changed her life. She enquired about the services in the Health Centre in her locality and began to attend antenatal classes regularly with her husband. The midwives discovered that her blood pressure was slightly elevated and with the necessary treatment this improved. When labour started, Banchiamlak came to Birakat Health Centre where she gave birth to a live baby girl after being assisted by Sr. Tringo (Hamlin midwife) without any complication and was discharged after



6 hours of observation. Now Banchiamlak has decided to attend the Health Centre for follow-up postnatal care and has opted for family planning services on a regular basis.



**Compound Superintendent** Ato Asfaw reported that planting of trees has been carried out since 2004 as a Hamlin Fistula annual campaign. Last year, during the rainy season called Kremt, 3000 indigenous trees were planted on the hillside of the College compound. For this work, around 100 persons from Hamlin Fistula and visitors from outside were involved in the campaign. Asfaw Abebe added that besides environmental protection benefits, such kind of events and joint action helps to strengthen unity among hospital staff.

**All at Hamlin Fistula UK** thank you for your continuing support.

**Drs. Reginald and Catherine Hamlin** came to Ethiopia to work in 1959. They were pioneers in performing surgery for women suffering from obstetric fistula. Once they began this work, the need became so great that in 1974 they established the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital specifically for women with childbirth injuries. Dr Reg. Hamlin died in 1993 but Dr Catherine Hamlin never doubted that the work had to continue. The Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital is an organization that cares for women with childbirth and related injuries. These women come to us destitute, in nothing but their urine soaked clothes, and more often than not, barefoot. Distanced by their relatives, we are their only hope; therefore **all care, treatment and surgery is completely free of charge.**

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 CEO

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

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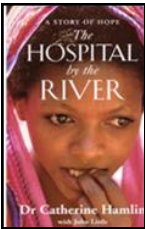
I confirm I have paid or will pay an amount of income tax and/or capital gains tax for each tax year (6 April to 5 April) that is at least equal to the amount of tax that all the charities that I donate to will reclaim on my gifts for that tax year. I understand that other taxes such as VAT and Council Tax do not qualify.

## Merchandise for Sale

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

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



Logo Lapel Pin  
**£1.50 each (if collected from office)** or **by post in multiples of 4 pins at £7**

Qty: .....packs of 4 pins @ £7 (within UK) £.....



Hamlin Fistula Key Ring 2 cm diam.  
**£2.50 each (if collected from office)** or **by post in multiples of 4 rings at £11**

Qty: .....packs of 4 rings @ £11 (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 **-3 copies for 3.50**

Qty: ..... X 3copies @ £3.50

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