



# Hamlin Fistula UK

The Only UK Charity Exclusively Supporting the Addis  
Ababa Fistula Hospital in Ethiopia

Charity  
Number:  
1153053

## Newsletter October 2015

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

**Dr Hamlin:**

**“My dream is to eradicate obstetric fistula from Ethiopia. I won't  
achieve this in my lifetime, but you might in yours.”**



Ethiopian Art – A Nativity Scene

All at Hamlin Fistula UK wish you a Happy Christmas and we send you our best wishes for the coming year. We take this opportunity to thank you for your generosity to us for so many years. With your continuing help Dr Hamlin will be one step nearer to fulfilling her dream of eradicating obstetric fistula from Ethiopia.

Only 7% of our patients give birth to a live baby during the labour that causes their obstetric fistula. About 25% of our patients will go on to carry a baby to full term once their fistula is treated. With so many patients unable to have children, there is much sadness for our women and girls but also much kindness and love for those who can go on to have another child. To be cured and able to return home is such a joyous occasion for both patients and staff.



Here we see a happy patient being discharged. She will go home wearing a new dress and a warm shawl given to her by the hospital.

On discharge they are told that they will hopefully go on to have another baby in the future. When this happens and they feel a baby start to walk in their tummy, they should start walking to one of our hospitals. Once there they can rest, eat good nutritious food, take some literacy classes and learn to knit and sew while they wait out their pregnancy. When the time comes, they will have a clean and safe Caesarean section. No one is ever turned away and all treatment is free, funded by you, our donors from all over the world. To hand a healthy, full term baby to a woman who has suffered so much is just the best moment for us all.

*Read the following story and others in Dr Hamlin's book, [The Hospital by the River](#).*

“When one of our doctors found her, Ajobush had been lying on a goatskin bed in a room with one small window for nine years, never seeing the sun. Her only human contact was with her sister who brought her food. Because of the darkened room and her poor diet, the calcium in her bones had leached away. Lying on her side, her hip bones had collapsed in the middle. She was brought to Addis Ababa for treatment and it took three years to get Ajobush walking. While undergoing treatment she started going to school and was first in her class when she



graduated from her school work. She now has a job looking after the records and accounts in the dairy.

Last year Ajobush was well enough to return home to her village for

a visit. It was the first time she'd been

back in years. She put on a new white dress for the big occasion.

When a woman saw her walking up the path to the village she

fled in terror. She thought it was her ghost come back to haunt them.

When asked about her future she said, *'Well, I did not know who I was when I came, it was after*

*I came here that I became somebody. I will be happy to do any work that you give me.'* Ajobush still

has serious disabilities. She has days when her back hurts so badly that she can't move. But the

twice-daily walk to the dairy is making her stronger. Before, she was painfully shy, now her

confidence is growing all the time. *Dr Catherine Hamlin.*

Literacy and numeracy classes are part of the road to recovery for women and girls who are

treated at the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital and its five regional centres. Most of our patients

have had little or no education. Over 90% leave cured and clean and for many, they have had

their first schooling during their stay at a Hamlin hospital and learning at least how to write

their name before going home.



### **Special Event at the Ethiopian Embassy in London**

At the end of June 2015, Dr Hamlin's granddaughters, Cat (*Catherine*) and Sarah, organised an

evening at the Ethiopian Embassy in London to raise funds and awareness of the Hamlin Fistula

organisation. Four of our UK Trustees were present to give them support. Around £2000 was

raised and this will be a great help in carrying on the work that their grandmother and late

grandfather began more than half a century ago.

The evening began with wine or soft drinks and snacks and people had the opportunity to get

acquainted. Everyone enjoyed this social time and new friends were made as well as catching up

with old friends.



*Our Chairman, Malcolm Hewitt addressing the audience.*

One of the highlights of the evening was the opportunity to meet some of the runners who are taking part in the Great Ethiopian Run in November. The ladies are working hard raising funds and ensuring they are fit to compete against Ethiopians at altitude. We are certain they will have a wonderful time and will take the opportunity to enjoy some of the beautiful country of Ethiopia and its people. They are also looking forward to visiting our hospital and the College of Midwives to learn first-hand about the work that goes on there. Another highlight was the opportunity to have a viewing of a new film about how the Drs Hamlin began their life in Ethiopia and of their wonderful hospital. This has only recently been produced by our colleagues in Switzerland and everyone found it very moving.

*We include here a message from Cat and Sarah:*

*“To all those who were able to attend our event at the Ethiopian Embassy on Friday 26th June 2015, we would like to thank you for making it such a success. We were so grateful to have the opportunity to share the work of Hamlin Fistula with you. We were so appreciative of the overwhelming support for this cause, as well as the incredibly generous donations given. This support enables the work to continue; in restoring the dignity of thousands of women across Ethiopia and preventing many more from enduring this debilitating condition”.*



## Report from Dr. Rita Schiffer, Ob/Gyn/Medical Director, Attat Hospital.

To have Hamlin midwifery students at Attat hospital has become by now a tradition.



and learn to work when not all things are always available.

Each year during June and July two groups come to practice in our hospital for hands-on-training. We are a rural hospital with a simple setup. Our working environment here may be rather similar to the setup the future midwives will find when they return back to their areas at home. This more simple setting gives the students the chance to improvise

*Dr Rita with Sr. Giday,  
Hamlin Midwifery Tutor.*

During their stay here the students are coached by the accompanying tutors from the college.



For the last 30 years we have had a maternity waiting home with 44 beds in the grounds of Attat hospital, this has been a most successful operation. The presence in this area of so many



high risk mothers poses an extra challenge and gives a good training opportunity.

Since the very beginning it has had a strong community based prevention programme with health stations and women's groups in the nearest 28 villages surrounding the hospital. The students visit the villages with our public health staff and can see how community participation is working. We perceive the students from Hamlin

Midwifery College are interested and committed. We can see the potential they hold to help women in pregnancy and labour after returning to their different regions. All efforts in the programme seem to be well spent to the advantage for both sides. We wish the College and its students God's blessing and continued professional success.

### **Hospital Chaplain, Zenebe Mesfin, writes about his visit to UK earlier this year.**

I want to say a general thank you to all of the Trustees in Birmingham, UK, for making me very welcome and allowing me to stay with them. The kindness shown to me during my stay was a great experience for me and in my spare time I was taken on many site-seeing tours by several of the Trustees. I had a wonderful and amazing time and in fact, it only feels like yesterday! For the first time in my life I tasted English food and I can truthfully say that I enjoyed the wide variety offered to me.



I joined Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia as a chaplain in May 2011. At that time chaplaincy was very new to my country, the management and all of the staff at the hospital, so no one was quite sure as to what my role should be. Over a period of time I explained this to them, but I really felt the need for further training in order for me to bring the right understanding of the profession to everyone here.

I had enrolled on a Chaplaincy course at St Michael's Theological College in Cardiff, Wales. After visa application, flights and other necessary documentations were in place, I set off on my flight from Addis Ababa to Heathrow airport, London. It was the first time I had been out of my country and at first it felt very strange. Once I arrived in Birmingham and was welcomed by UK Trustees, it felt just like home.

I spent four days with Reverend Brian (*UK Trustee and hospital chaplain*) and Mark (*hospital chaplain*) in a very large hospital in Dudley in the West Midlands and this proved to be an amazing time for me. Brian and Mark were my mentors and they taught me all practical knowledge, discipline and relationships with families. That time spent with them prepared me for my course in Cardiff.

At the end of my stay in Birmingham I met all of the UK Trust and was presented with a lap-top computer. I was overwhelmed - this gift was a tremendous help to me in my training at St Michael's College.



Even though the course was organised for chaplains working in the UK NHS, I found it quite informative and overall, the course and the experience I have gained from being at the Russells Hall Hospital in Dudley will be of great help to me here in Ethiopia. At the end of my stay in Cardiff I took the opportunity to visit my sister and her family in Leeds. I spent a lovely time with them and was able to enjoy once again my familiar food of injerra and wot.

My time in UK came to an end all too soon and I had to return to my home country and to the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital where I was able to put all I had learnt into practice. Yes, definitely the training will make a difference to my work. I have been able to help the staff and patients at the rehabilitation and reintegration centre in Desta Mender as well as the patients and staff at the hospital.

Brian has since visited us in Addis and I have been able to compare with him the differences of chaplaincy in UK and Ethiopia. He has helped me in a big way and I feel I would still like to broaden my experience further to support the people in my country.

Blessings to you all and special blessings to the UK Trustees.

### **Patient's Story**

Here we tell you about a patient from the Afar region in Northern Ethiopia. At 19, she became pregnant with her first child and after an agonising six-day labour, her child was stillborn. She



was left with a horrific fistula injury.

Without access to running water she found it impossible to stay clean. She became isolated from her village and her husband left her. Afraid and alone, she spent two years curled up on her side, hoping to get better. Then she heard of a hospital in Addis Ababa where women just like her were being cured. Unable to walk, she was brought in on a stretcher by her brothers.

She was suffering from severe depression and muscle contractures. She was given good food, love, support and long-term physiotherapy. Her fistula was closed with a single surgical operation. She was given a big send-off by other patients and staff and left the hospital a happy woman, cured, in a new dress and shawl and with bus money for her journey home.

### **Hospital Staff Go Beyond Their Call of Duty**

Dr Hamlin has had a positive impact on all of her staff in helping them to be committed to their day-to-day activities. They are busy throughout the day helping to change the lives of so many helpless women with obstetric fistula. They have a great passion in helping others in any way they can.



One example we can see here, is of Pharmacist Liya, who, along with fifteen other members of staff at the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital, voluntarily donated blood for those in need of it. This surely is going beyond the call of duty.

**John Chassar Moir** was a professor of obstetrics and gynaecology in Oxford who achieved distinction for his repair of vesicovaginal 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 United Nations Population Fund indicators remind us that:

Every minute a woman somewhere dies in pregnancy or childbirth. This adds up to almost 1500 women dying each day from pregnancy-related causes.

A million or more children are left motherless each year as a result of maternal mortality.

These children are 3 to 10 times more likely to die within two years than children who live with both parents.

Almost half of infant deaths per year result from poor maternal health and inadequate delivery care.

Over the last decade the obstetric fistula problem has been coming to global attention.

Gynaecologists from many affected countries in Africa and Asia visit the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital to learn how to treat the condition. This hospital is the centre of excellence for the understanding, treatment and proven success in treating the condition.

At **Hamlin Fistula UK** we thank you, our donors who help in so many ways to enable this wonderful and much-needed surgery and care to continue, so that each patient admitted can receive vital care free of charge enabling her to become a beautiful woman again. We are grateful to you for your interest in these women who come to us for help, each one bringing her own tragic story.

*We are grateful to you for your interest in these unfortunate women who have been injured by simply trying to bring a child into the world. If you wish to donate to us as part of your Christmas giving this year you will enable one more woman to receive life changing surgery and treatment for her childbirth injury. So many women are still waiting to be healed. Restoring one lady's dignity is a priceless gift.*

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 Company Secretary

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

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Cheque attached £.....

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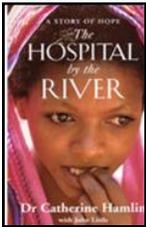
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**“Two for One”**

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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