



HAMLIN
FISTULA
AUSTRALIA

Treatment, prevention and raising awareness of obstetric fistulas

CHRISTMAS 2023

A wonderful year draws to a close

It is my pleasure to write to you from Addis Ababa and to wish you and your family all the best for Christmas and the New Year. As you reflect upon the last year and look forward to the new year, I want you to know that your support and help for Hamlin Fistula is changing lives.

The women we see in our hospital in Addis Ababa and at our treatment centres across Ethiopia receive life changing treatment and are helped to reintegrate into their communities with a new confidence. They are able to realize a new life. I spoke with some women we had treated in Metu Hospital, as part of the Project Zero Pilot, earlier in November. I asked them what difference this had made to their lives. They all threw their hands up. "It is immeasurable! I was isolated at home, embarrassed to go out – now I can even visit the market", said one who had suffered with an obstetric fistula for over 30 years. They all agreed and expressed their heartfelt gratitude. What a privilege we have to be able to "immeasurably" change lives in this way, all because of the money we receive from people like you. It makes me and my team even more determined to do more. We want:

- To train more midwives and help our Masters Programme students reach their potential, spreading best practice throughout Ethiopia.
- To find more patients across Ethiopia through our patient identification program and the Project Zero initiative.
- To treat patients in our centres with our expert (and expanding) surgical team. They also train surgeons from other countries (as part of the International Federation of Gynaecology and Obstetrics fellow initiative) who visit our hospital in Addis Ababa.



Dr Catherine Hamlin 'Emaye' with Tesfaye Mamo at the last birthday party in 2020, just a few weeks before her death at 96. Her presence and inspiration is still felt throughout the hospital and College of Midwives every day.



This hole in the ground holds the foundations for the new dormitories where both male and female undergraduate and master's students will live in years to come.



Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia CEO Tesfaye Mamo visiting the construction at the Midwives College.

- To offer rehabilitation and reintegration support to the women we treat – helping them to have the best life possible.

I am pleased to report that we have made real progress over the last year. In our financial year to end June 2023, we treated over 3,500 women – the largest ever number – including an increase of 50% in Obstetric Fistula cases over the last two years. Every one of these cases represents a new beginning, and many of these women become role models in their communities and powerful advocates for improved maternal health.

Of course, prevention is absolutely the key to improving maternal health and reducing birth injuries. As Catherine Hamlin herself said “Midwifery I believe is the answer – to put a well-trained midwife in every village of Ethiopia would soon eradicate obstetric fistula.” This is often quoted – and quite rightly! The Hamlin College of Midwives has trained 256 midwives over the last 16 years, and the curriculum was recently used as the basis for nationwide degree courses. Hamlin is leading the way in training undergraduates and now in our Masters Program in Midwifery as well. I am delighted that with the support of Hamlin Fistula Australia donors we have started our college development and expansion

programme. Contracts were signed in March, and despite an unusually extended rainy season, building is well under way with the extensive groundworks and foundations near completion. The works will enable us to train more midwives, and put a greater number through the Masters Programme, developing the next generation of leaders in maternal health care, in a fantastic facility. This is the most extensive Hamlin construction programme since the Hospital was first built in Addis Ababa and will be instrumental in the delivery of a “Fistula free Ethiopia”.

Your donation makes a tremendous difference to so many lives and our work is as important as ever. We continue to be wholly funded from the kind donations of supporters across the world and are humbled by your continued generosity.

For your prayers

The security situation in Tigray, Northern Ethiopia, has improved a lot and relative peace has been restored following the peace deal reached between the Ethiopian government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front. We were able to connect with our staff in Mekele and resumed treatment of women with childbirth injuries. On the contrary, there is an ongoing conflict (and hence state of emergency) in Amhara region which is affecting movement of people including women seeking treatment from their maternal injuries. Due to the conflict in the Amhara region, our patient identification officers were not able to go out and find patients. As a result, our patient flow in our Bahir Dar treatment centre has been affected significantly. Also, there are sporadic incidents of security problems in some parts of Oromia region but our activities in the region are largely unaffected. Our college has not been affected as it is closer to Addis Ababa. However, students whose parents are in the conflict zones have worries and concerns about their loved ones. In all of this, our priorities are to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our staff, patients, and students. Pray for us so that peace is restored in all parts of Ethiopia.

Wishing all the best at this joyous time of year to you and your family.

Tesfaye Mamo

Chief Executive
Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia



Bahir Dar treatment centre staff remain cheerful, despite the unrest around them.

The Story of Tewabech

Tewabech Temecho Tema, a 30-year-old single mother from Shara Kebele in southern Ethiopia, is a shining example of how obstetric fistula survivors can overcome adversity and thrive with the right support.

Tewabech's family relied solely on petty trade, poultry production, and small ruminants for their livelihood. Despite her challenging circumstances, Tewabech was an active participant in social issues and had a strong work ethic, saving 150.00/week.

For years, Tewabech had no access to information about Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia or obstetric fistula treatment. She was divorced 15 years ago due to health problems and sought treatment at Chinch Hospital in Gamo Zone. However, her condition required higher-level assistance, and she was referred to Yirgalem Hospital in the Sidama Region and then to the Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia's main hospital in Addis Ababa. There, Tewabech received not only medical treatment but also health education, psychosocial support, and vocational training in poultry production, pottery, and crafts. She was even provided with seed money to start her own business.

Unfortunately, Tewabech's personal life was fraught with challenges. Her husband left her after the birth of



Tewabech and her daughter.



Desta Mender where Tewabech began her new life as a successful businesswoman.



Discussion with Tewabech and her neighbours. Her recovery from Fistula has affected her wider community for their good.

their daughter, and she was forced to divorce again after migrating to another place. However, Tewabech did not give up hope. She continued to attend health treatments at Yirgalem twice a year and eventually joined the Women's Empowerment Program at Desta Mender to become financially independent and reintegrate into her community.

During her rehabilitation, Tewabech received psychological counselling and vocational training on topics such as hygiene and nutrition. She learned skills that allowed her to provide for herself and her family. She also took training in financial business management that gave her the tools she needed to run her own small business in Begi, southwestern Ethiopia. With seven hens, Tewabech started her poultry farm, collected and

sold eggs in her neighborhood, and adopted her elderly brother's 10-year-old daughter to raise her, providing formal education for both her adopted daughter and her biological 5-year-old daughter.

Tewabech's success is a testament to the holistic approach to providing rehabilitation and reintegration support services to women affected by obstetric fistula in Ethiopia. It also gives fistula patients the vocational skills they need to become financially independent and reintegrate into their communities. This ground-breaking initiative trains women every year, offering leadership and communications training, as well as small-business guidance. By providing women with choices and independence, the program empowers not only the women themselves but also their families, neighbours, and communities.

Thank you!

Thanks to the generosity of Australian donors, Hamlin Fistula Australia is providing about \$6 million for the construction of new buildings at the Hamlin College of Midwives.

These buildings will include bedrooms, lecture rooms and a new library. We are thankful that the costs of the building works are in hand, but the College needs further funds to furnish these new buildings.

So, this Christmas, could you give a gift to these midwives in training? So

many things will be needed...from pillows and blankets in the accommodation block, to a new interactive television display for a lecture room.

We have a list of some necessary furnishings for this project. Please use the enclosed donation slip to select the one you would like to give, or nominate

a sum to go into the general fund for the outfitting.

Everyone at Hamlin Fistula Australia wishes you a joyous Christmas and New Year. Our office will be closed between Wednesday 20th December 2023 and Tuesday 16th January 2024.



Bedding

\$10



Library book

\$15



Bed frame

\$20



Mattress

\$30



Library bookshelf

\$50



Library desk

\$100



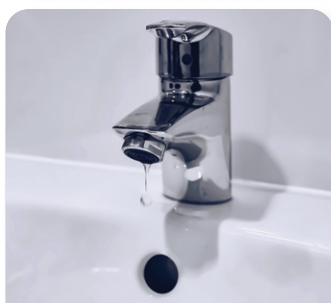
Projector roll up screen 92-inch display

\$340



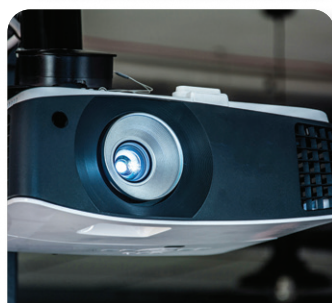
Library computer

\$500



Bathroom fitout

\$1000



Projector

\$1770



Library wi-fi with all accessories

\$1525



TV interactive display

\$3270