



Christmas 2025 News



A joyous Ethiopian Christmas celebration at Bole Medhaniealem Church in Addis Ababa. Source: REUTERS

Christmas thanks

Those of us living in Australia are starting to enjoy longer daylight hours and warmer weather encouraging more outdoor activities and water sports.

In Ethiopia, like some other parts of the world, seasons are not determined so much by temperature but more by the amount of rain falling. The dry season in Ethiopia is generally between October and May with the wet season being from June to September with the most rain falling in June, July and August.

Another difference between Australia and Ethiopia is the date most often celebrated as Christmas Day. Most Christian denominations in Australia recognise 25 December each year as the occasion to celebrate the birth of the baby Jesus and many families have developed their own way to do so. The majority of Christians in Ethiopia have an Orthodox background so celebrate Christmas on 7 January.

Whatever your personal beliefs and background, I hope the coming Christmas and New Year period provides you with the opportunity to think about and give thanks for your own personal circumstances and also generates an interest in the needs of others.

Hamlin Fistula Australia Limited is delighted to be able to continue to support financially and in other ways the magnificent work established over 60 years ago by the late Drs Reg and Catherine Hamlin (right). In this newsletter you will be able to see exactly how your generous donations have contributed to their ongoing work. Thank you for your partnership.



Doug Marr
Executive Officer and Company Secretary
Hamlin Fistula Australia Limited

Hamlin Fistula Australia Limited

Administering the Hamlin Fistula Relief and Aid Fund | ABN 58 076 840 250 | CFN 16100 | DGR 900 484 487
PO Box 965 Wahroonga NSW 2076 E emailus@hamlinfistula.org.au P 02 8007 7435

W www.hamlinfistula.org.au | Special thanks to everyone who provided photographs for this newsletter.

The Sydney office will close on Friday 19th December 2025 and re-open on Tuesday 13th January.





A spacious new dining room.



Improved facilities in the kitchen.



A good night's sleep is guaranteed in the new dormitories.



Sparkling new bathrooms for the students.



The new library boasts expansive windows for maximum light.

A new era begins

Over the past few years, extensive building works at the Hamlin College of Midwives and Desta Mender Rehabilitation Centre have improved everything from dormitories, kitchen and dining hall, the library, the lecture hall, the roads, the boundary fences (to keep hyenas away from students and patients) and even a coffee shop. This work has totalled approximately \$US4.75 million, and has been entirely funded by Hamlin Fistula Australia. Many of our supporters gave specific gifts for furniture and equipment in the new facilities. It is with great thanks for the generosity of Australian donors that we see the wrapping up of the building work, and a new era of midwife education and patient rehabilitation begin.

Cooking, dining and sleeping

A newly renovated kitchen has been completed to significantly improve the quality, variety, and nutritional value of meals served, contributing to better student health and wellbeing. It will also open up opportunities for hosting campus events, running student-led food initiatives, or even offering hospitality training programs.

The new dining hall with capacity for over 300 offers improved food services in a welcoming and functional environment, contributing to student satisfaction and well-being. This facility can be used for presentations and workshops and major events associated with future training opportunities to be offered to midwives from all over Ethiopia.

In addition to the dining hall a “Koffee Korner” has been built with landscaped areas surrounding it for students to enjoy socialising between classes. New walking paths have also been constructed to link all the new facilities to existing classrooms and accommodation.

The new dormitory with a capacity for 98 beds, provides high quality student accommodation for Master of Science (Midwifery) students and students undertaking short courses. The new dormitory has two wings with bathrooms at each end and a lounge and meeting room between the dormitories. The new building makes campus life more comfortable and accessible. To access the new dormitory, it was necessary to construct a new road and to upgrade the existing roads into the College and Desta Mender. The building contractor has donated a new road to link the College to the bitumen road and this is a significant milestone as the access was almost impassable with a normal vehicle in the rainy season. These roads will ensure safer and more efficient access to and around the college, benefiting not only students and staff but also visitors and the local community.

Books and lectures

The new two storey library will serve as a hub for academic research and collaborative learning, supporting students' educational pursuits with up-to-date resources and technology, essential for academic success. The existing library has been converted to classrooms and a laboratory.

The design of the expanded College includes a raked lecture theatre with a 120 seat capacity that has modern technology allowing presentations to be streamed and recorded. This enables lectures to be received throughout Ethiopia and

even in other countries as part of the future role of the Hamlin College of Midwives as a world leader in the training of midwives. The lecture theatre will support more engaging and technologically advanced teaching, enhancing the quality of education delivered. Together, these facilities represent a forward-looking vision that positions the College as a competitive, student-centered institution ready to meet future challenges and opportunities.

Opportunities

Currently there are plans in place to expand the role of the College of Midwives to provide continuing professional development for midwives nationally. Hamlin Fistula Australia has partnered with Catherine Hamlin Fistula Foundation in Australia to fund initiatives that will bring together international partners to support the prevention and treatment of fistula in Ethiopia. One new initiative is a partnership between a Swedish organisation, Karolinska and the Ethiopian Midwife Association (EMA) and the MIDWIZE to build Hamlin College of Midwives (HCM) and Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia's capacity to deliver continuing professional development courses for midwives nationally. MIDWIZE is a framework to guide quality improvements in Midwife Led Care. Focusing on midwives as the hub

and the primary provider of care at all levels of a country's maternal and reproductive health care system facilitates relational, safe, cost-effective, and patient-centred care.

Once MIDWIZE is operational, elements of the Masters curriculum can be adapted into additional courses to create a focused suite of Continued Professional Development trainings (CPD) in partnership with Ethiopian Midwife Association. These CPD trainings would be open to all midwives across Ethiopia and provided at HFE's five regional hospitals and at the College. This is fully in line with the College's mission and HFE's Prevention program. This would not have been possible without the funds provided by HFA donors to undertake the massive expansion and upgrade of the College.

Desta Mender

A new training room (below) constructed adjacent to the physiotherapy clinic at Desta Mender has made a significant impact on the rehabilitation programs offered there.

The facility has significantly enhanced the effectiveness of our Women Empowerment Programs. Seventy-five women who have suffered from fistula live at Desta Mender for three months. The new facilities provide a welcoming space for both training and graduation ceremonies.



The lush green of a much-loved Ethiopian garden.



No hyenas will get through this fence.

HFA also funded the restoration of the grounds at Desta Mender with new water tanks for reticulation, lawns dug up and replaced with good drainage and reticulation systems and gardens refurbished and paths repaired.

The staff were especially grateful to the donors at HFA who have funded the project and restored the beauty of Desta Mender. The completion of the kitchen ventilation system marks a meaningful step in returning the compound to its former condition.

"I would like to extend our sincere appreciation for your continued support and for the newly constructed training centre," said Tigist Aman, Rehabilitation and Reintegration Manager.



When the training pays off

My name is Konjit. I am a midwife at Olonso Health Centre in southern Ethiopia. I have been working here for 3 years, since graduating from the Hamlin College of Midwives.

There are three midwives at this health centre, so we each take one shift: 8am - 4pm, 4pm - 12am, or 12am - 8am. There is always a midwife here, but I am the only one trained by Hamlin.

I live seven kilometres away, so I travel here by motorbike or Bajaj (three-wheeled motorbike taxi). I like to clean my desk first and organise my materials for the day. Then I wash my hands and start to examine women who arrived for ante-natal check-ups. We advise mothers to come for 8 ante-natal visits, but often they don't start until they are 5 or 6 months pregnant. After a woman gives birth, she normally stays here for 24 hours. One week later, she comes back for check-ups. If there are complications, she can come back anytime.

Every month, I travel out into the local villages and hold a community health forum. I explain the importance of safe delivery with a trained health professional. I also share the

services we can provide here, like folic acid in pregnancy and vaccines for babies.

Before I started working here, less than half of women from the local community came to the Health Centre to give birth. Now 90% of births happen here. A major challenge we face is the lack of essential equipment. When our autoclave machine is not working, it's difficult to sterilise our tools. The maintenance team come from another area, they ask for a lot of money to fix the machine. Instead, we have to use traditional methods, like boiling water to sterilise the tools.

When I was younger, I wanted to be a doctor and help improve healthcare for mothers. I saw that many women deliver babies in their homes. I saw that they suffered from fistula and other complications. So, when I got a chance to enrol at Hamlin College of Midwives, I didn't hesitate. During my training, I learned how to manage complications in childbirth. Now I can work independently. I am so grateful for everything I learned at the Hamlin College of Midwives.

Konjit with one of her patients.



Thanks to the new facilities at the College of Midwives, even more professionals like Konjit will be deployed throughout Ethiopia.



Sometimes the old fashioned ways still work best

(With thanks to Maheder Haileselassie for the photos throughout this newsletter).