

Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital



Newsletter | September 2010



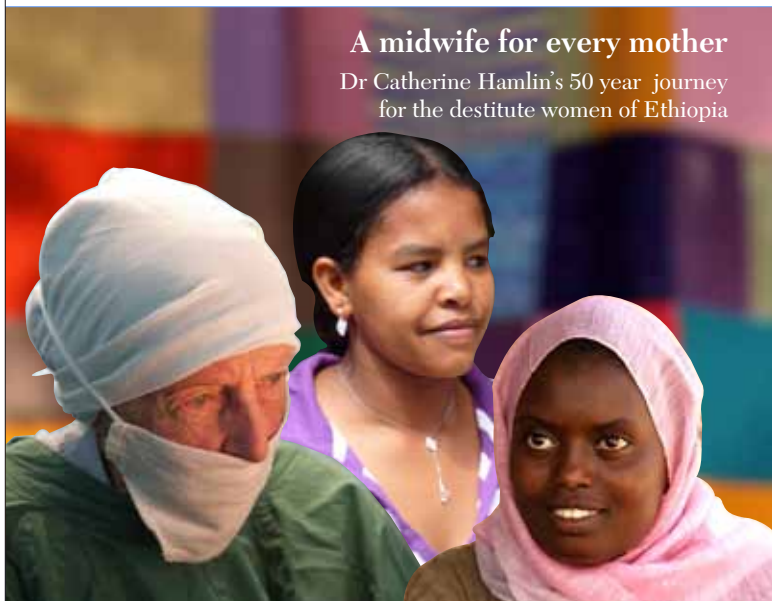
Hamlin Fistula Relief and Aid Fund proudly presents a new documentary about the work of Dr Catherine Hamlin, the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital and the new Hamlin College of Midwives in Ethiopia



Lighting a Candle

A midwife for every mother

Dr Catherine Hamlin's 50 year journey
for the destitute women of Ethiopia



Lighting a Candle documentary screening
Tuesday 19 October 2010, 8pm at Macquarie University
Tickets \$25 • To book phone 8007 7435 or visit www.hamlinfistula.org.au

LIGHTING A CANDLE

The Hamlin Fistula Relief and Aid Fund proudly presents Lighting a Candle.

This new documentary about the lifelong dedication of Dr Hamlin and the work of the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital in Ethiopia comprehensively depicts, for the first time, the midwifery training strategy, the Hospital's regional outreach program and the long term benefits for rural Ethiopian women who are cured of obstetric fistula through the Hospital's holistic approach.

The first Sydney screening of this new documentary will be held on **Tuesday 19 October 2010 in the Atrium at Macquarie University at 8pm.**

Tickets to this event can be purchased via www.hamlinfistula.org.au or by completing the attached slip and posting it with your payment to the Fund at PO Box 965 Wahroonga NSW 2076 or by contacting the Fund's office on (02) 800 77 435. Tickets cost \$25 per person which includes a light supper at the conclusion of the one hour screening. The Fund is also planning to hold screenings in other States and cities and invites supporters who would like to assist in arranging such events to contact the Fund's office.

See the Hamlin Fistula® Relief and Aid Fund's new website at www.hamlinfistula.org.au

The Fund's new contact details are: Telephone 02 800 77 435 | Fax 02 800 77 470 | Email: emailus@hamlinfistula.org.au

DR HAMLIN'S LETTER

My Dear Friends in Australia

It is with pleasure that I write this message and send my greetings to you all. I am now safely back in Ethiopia after a successful operation in London to install a new hip which had worn out! Everything went well and I was discharged after the surgery on the 8th day and now a few months later I am walking normally with only one stick, soon to be discarded, and with no pain.

A wonderful welcome

I arrived back on 8 June to a heartwarming welcome. My son Richard came with me to see that I arrived home safely. The plane arrived early, at 7am, and yet even at this early hour there were 4 staff members to meet me at the airport. Matron Ejigayehu was there with a lovely bunch of roses. So too were Mamitu and Likelesh, who have worked with me since the Princess Tsehay Memorial Hospital days, when they first arrived as patients. Now they both have senior positions on our staff. By their care many patients have been blessed and returned to a "new life" after suffering tragic fistula injuries. Daniel our driver took control of the luggage and we were on our way. What a welcome awaited me at the Hospital! As I arrived it seemed that the whole car park area was full of staff holding flowers to give me. Soon I was overwhelmed with hugs and kisses as I struggled to remember the names of all the familiar faces! I know that my memory failed me partly because of the emotion I felt at such a welcome, but perhaps I can also blame the anesthetic!

The welcome in my home from my faithful workers was touching and overwhelming - two have been with me from almost the day we arrived in Ethiopia and have been loyal friends and have cared for me through all my years in this wonderful country!

Later in the day we had another big welcome in our chapel when there were prayers and speeches of welcome and again my heart was touched and a few tears shed! Later we shared a lovely lunch in the sunshine on the lawn. There we all enjoyed a feast together and exchanged news. And so ended a day that will remain in my memory and a day when I thanked God for bringing me safely home to go on working for our beloved and needy patients with my loyal and wonderful staff.

So now after nearly three months I feel that I have hardly been



Hospital staff welcome Dr Hamlin and her son, Richard

away especially after this week operating for the first time since my return! My hip is no longer a problem and I only use a stick when I am walking up the long path with its many steps which leads from my house to the main hospital building.

Mekelle Fistula Centre visit

It is still cold and very wet weather here in Addis Ababa. So we were thankful last Sunday to fly North to Mekelle in the Province of Tigray. There we had some staff meetings at our centre. We do this occasionally. There we found warmth and sunshine again!

Dr. Melaku is in charge of this centre, and was our host for the almost three days we spent there and what a perfect host, and what a welcome we received from the staff of that centre and from the patients too! It is really your centre as you in Australia provided the money to build it - and how beautiful it looked surrounded by green lawns and some old big trees and bougainvilleas in bloom on the walls and roses in the gardens round the car park area.

The doctors from our other regional centres, senior nurses, and Health Officers and our own senior staff from Addis Ababa were all there. So it was a big social occasion as well as a time when we reviewed our work, and were able to talk about the future, our problems and our ideas for improvement. We heard reports from the Centers and other presentations on different subjects, and lots of new ideas!

Picnic lunches were a welcome break on the lawn under the trees, provided by the centre's kitchen staff. We had more meetings in the afternoons, sometimes in smaller groups, until the evening meal at a restaurant in the very nice town of Mekelle, or at the hotel. The last night was rather special and amusing, as Mark Bennett, our CEO, and Professor Gordon Williams, the Medical Director, and I were all dressed up as Ethiopians. We had each received lavish presents - among

which were outfits for the two men and a special Tigrean dress for me.

Mark and Gordon wore two startling white cotton trousers, and a long over shirt of white too, and even white sandals that fitted! I had a glamorous Tigrean dress made from special soft crinkly white cotton with multi colored borders on the dress, sash and shawl! It fitted well and I felt comfortable in it. You can see in the photograph how we looked! We were overwhelmed by such kindness and generosity. It was indeed a happy party with much chatter and laughter. I feel sure it will be hard for any future similar event to be quite so enjoyable!



Dr Hamlin, Mark Bennett and Professor Williams in traditional Ethiopian dress

Comings and goings

We have also had another excitement recently when we farewelled our first graduates from the Midwifery College as they started their holidays and went back to their country homes until the official day on 2 October when they will return and receive their Bachelor degrees at a special celebration. We look forward to seeing some of you from Australia here at the graduation ceremony!

This recent farewell was a lovely family occasion and the eleven pupils surprised us as they stood up one by one and gave a really accomplished presentation on some relevant topic, which they had researched. It was indeed touching to see a girl, who three years ago had come as a school girl from a country area, now able to stand up in front of an audience and give such a talk, in fluent English. We were all impressed and proud too of our College tutors who have taught them so well. We later enjoyed a delicious lunch in the College's new kitchen and dining room area and the sun shone! The generous support from Australia has enabled us to build these new facilities to a high standard and we are very grateful for this very generous assistance.

Another piece of news is a sad one. We shall be losing Dr Andrew Browning soon, as he moves on to work elsewhere, which I am sure will be for the same needy patients. We thank him for his wonderful work during these past 9 years and we shall all miss him – for his example of care for his patients and for his teaching of other fistula surgeons. I feel sure we shall hear of what he has accomplished wherever he decides to work and we wish him and his wife, Stephanie, and their two small boys much success and God's blessing on all they undertake. Since I arrived back from England visitors have been coming in a steady stream. Some are tourists, others are here to work on special projects in Ethiopia but all with a deep concern for our patients, and it is for these precious broken lives that we are all here. One guest arrived yesterday from Melbourne returning to the University of Addis Ababa where he works. He was laden with huge boxes of wonderful gifts for the patients – things that young women and girls will enjoy! And recently we have had many boxes of shawls from Australia and from England all carefully knitted and packed by kind friends. Our gratitude for all these gifts is enormous, and I know as I see every patient in this cold weather wrapped in a lovely warm colorful shawl that they too are enormously grateful.

I am thankful that there are now so many who are dedicated and trained well to carry on this work into the future until the day when no more women suffer such an injury and such sorrow. The task of prevention ahead is enormous! But we have made a start and our midwives have received such a good clinical training that I know as more and more go out into the provinces we shall see a reduction in this tragic condition in the areas where they will be working. It is surely the beginning and, we hope, the eventual "death knell" for fistula injuries! It is the dawning of new hope for so many mothers in the countryside, who will now have skilled help and loving care as they face labor, no longer alone and fearful!

So once again I send you all, my greetings from Ethiopia and my thanks and love. Our gratitude to Australia is great and I feel proud that we have such wonderful support from my own country!

With my greetings and love.

Dr E. Catherine Hamlin AC

Please accept the attached donation for the work
of the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital through the
HAMLIN FISTULA® RELIEF & AID FUND

Please post to PO Box 965 Wahroonga NSW 2076

Donations of over \$2 are allowable Income Tax Deductions.

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CHALTU'S BIG 'THANK YOU' BASKET

Eleven years ago Dr Hamlin cured Chaltu's obstetric fistula. In 2006, Chaltu went back to Addis Ababa and stayed at the Fistula Hospital after giving birth to a baby girl.

Chaltu is now 26. She has just made her third trip to Addis Ababa. She brought her daughter and a traditional Ethiopian basket which it took Chaltu four months to make. Before that she saved for nearly a year to buy the necessary raw materials.

Chaltu presented her beautiful colourful basket to Dr Hamlin and the staff at the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital to express her heartfelt thanks for the loving kindness and good treatment she received at the Hospital so many years ago.



FUND NEWS

The Fund thanks the many Australians who support the work of the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital, through direct donations to the Fund, by knitting shawls, and donating other goods and by undertaking fundraising activities.

Feats of Endurance

Some of these activities involve impressive feats of endurance, such as the recent Sydney City to Surf Race in which a number of competitors ran 14kms through the city and suburbs of Sydney to raise funds for the Hospital. Other supporters donated to the Fund in support of Karen Kalantha Brewis who lives in the UK and walked barefoot from her home in Eckington to the Women's Hospital in Birmingham, a distance of about 35 miles.

A few months ago another Sydneysider Paul Goldman, who works for Macquarie Bank in Hong Kong, completed the Marathon des Sables to raise money for the women who

endure great suffering from obstructed labor and obstetric fistula. This incredible endurance race takes place annually across the Sahara Desert in Morocco. It is known as the "toughest footrace on earth". Comprised of six marathons in seven days and totalling a distance of 243kms, Paul crossed sand dunes, rocky terrain and salt pans in temperatures as high as 50°C. As all competitors have to be self sufficient, Paul had to carry everything he needed (apart from water) including food, cooking stove, clothes, sleeping bag and medical supplies. With the support of the Macquarie Group Foundation and many other donors, Paul raised over \$30,000 in support of the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital.

Dr Hamlin described Paul Goldman's feat in the following way: *Congratulations Paul. By completing the Marathon des Sables, you have experienced the strength of will and agony that prolonged endurance inevitably requires and so your achievement has identified you with our women of endurance.*

The same can be said for all these feats of endurance. The Fund thanks all its supporters who, by their contributions in so many ways, sacrifice something to help Ethiopian women in need.



The Fund thanks David Austin roses for its continuing support of the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital through the sale of the Golden Jubilee Rose during 2010. Look for the rose in a nursery near you.





The Nun's Story

Emahoy (a title given to a nun) thinks she is 75 years old, she may even be older. She says: "40 to 50 years ago I had a still birth after 6 days labour. After I regained my strength I found I was incontinent and the leaking did not stop".

She continued living with her husband thinking she would get better. She conceived a second time and she prayed to have a normal delivery and a live baby. Sadly, the labour went on for four days and her worst fears came true. She said: "After a stillbirth and with a chronic health condition, my husband left me and I started living with relatives."

After 3 years living with members of her family her smelly unclean condition made it more and more difficult for her live with them. She says that: "The only option I had was to become a nun and live in the grounds of a church for the last 40 - 50 years." Recently a man found her in the church compound and convinced her she could be treated at the fistula centre in Bahir Dar.

After spending nearly a month at the centre, Emahoy recovered well and went home dry with her fistula repaired and a smile on her face. The Hospital staff wished her well in her new life.