



The **HAMLIN** Newsletter is published quarterly by Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia, and distributed to its members.

Fighting Another Childbirth Injury: PELVIC ORGAN PROLAPS (POP)

More than 250 Women with POP Cases Have Been Successfully Treated at Hamlin Facilities During the Fiscal Year



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UNAA Lifework Award 2017 for Dr Catherine Hamlin



The United Nations Association of Australia (UNAA) has awarded Dr. Catherine Hamlin with the 'UNAA Lifework Award 2017'. Dr. Catherine is recognized for dedicating her life and work to restoring the health and dignity of more than 50, 000 Ethiopian women who have survived a horrendous and preventable childbirth injury-obstetric fistula. Together, with her

husband, Reg, Dr. Catherine has dramatically transformed the maternal healthcare landscape for women of Ethiopia.



The purpose of the UNAA Lifeworks Awards is to recognize ordinary people doing extraordinary things. Established in 1946, the UNAA endeavors to inform, inspire and engage all

Australians regarding the work, goals, and values of the United Nations to create a safer, fairer and more sustainable world.

A Step Forward in the Treatment of Major Childbirth Injury: Pelvic Organ Prolapse (POP)

Given, the world's first existing free treatment center of obstetric fistula for over four decades, Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia (HFE) has now becoming a center of excellence in all its program areas. Alongside addressing obstetric fistula cases, HFE, through its Urogynecology Fellowship Program, has started

Led by the Medical Director, Dr. Fekade Ayenachew, the medical team has performed two round operations at each of the outreach centers and successfully treated more than 100 women with POP cases, screened by the health bureaus of the two regional governments.



Dr. Fekade, the Medical Director, said that Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia has succeeded in restoring the dignity of more than 250 women who had suffered the agony of this child birth injury in silence for years in all its

rendering its high quality care for women with pelvic organ prolapse (POP), a childbirth injury with relatively high social and psychological pressures on women.

This year, HFE has treated a significant number of women with POP cases with a particular focus on the two major regions in the North, Tigray and Amhara, where our Mekelle and Bahir Dar outreach centers respectively are located.

facilities during the fiscal year.

Dr. Melaku and Dr. Bitew, senior medical surgeons and members of the medical team, expressed their happiness with the results and thanked the regional health bureaus for their active involvement.

HFE Holds 2017 International Partners Meeting



accomplishments during the fiscal year and proposed operational plan for the subsequent budget year. Discussions were also made on the Urogynecology Fellowship Program and the new Strategic Plan.

Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia (HFE) held its International Partners Meeting on June 2 and 3, 2017 at the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital's compound. The meeting was attended by Hamlin Trustees from overseas, representatives of partner organizations, and Hamlin Board and Management members.

Dr. Tesfaye Yacob, HFE CEO, addressed a keynote speech, highlighting that Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia has developed many innovative practice, achieving great results, over the years, in all its three programs-treatment, prevention, and rehabilitation and reintegration. "Behind Hamlin's successes are its International Partners, to which we are truly grateful," he thanked.

During the two-day meeting, participants discussed on the organization's

Hamlin International Partners Meeting is held annually with the aim of reviewing the organization's accomplishments over the year and proposed plan for the subsequent fiscal year.



2017 Annual Review Meeting

Every year in July, the end of Ethiopian government fiscal year, Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia evaluates its accomplishments over the year and plans for the next fiscal period. This year's annual review meeting was held in Hawassa, very close to our Yirgalem Center in the South, from July 27 to 28, 2017. A team of 70 members, including the CEO, management team members, center heads, mentors and midwives attended the meeting.

On his opening remark, Dr. Tesfaye Yacob, the CEO, said, "We've been reviewing our performance on a quarterly-basis, and we've scored significant improvements this year, and I



would like to thank our Medical Unit, Dr Fekade and other surgeons for their biggest share of these achievements. I believe we've shouldered the selfless founders', Drs. Catherine and Reginald Hamlin, lifelong dream of eradicating obstetric fistula from Ethiopia. "

During the meeting, program managers, outreach center heads and mentors have



presented their annual reports for discussions. Preparing a context-based-operational plan, based on the new Strategic Plan, for the coming fiscal year was also among the major activities of the review meeting.

May 23 at Hamlin: Ethiopia's International Day to End Obstetric Fistula Celebration



Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital, perhaps anywhere else in the world, is the right place to celebrate the day, and thank you for joining us today. Celebrating International Day to End Obstetric Fistula is a way to encourage partners to join their hands and raise their voices to promote

This year's national event of celebrating the International Day to End Obstetric Fistula with the theme "Hope, Healing and Dignity for All" was held inside the breathtaking compound of The Addis Ababa Hamlin Fistula Hospital on May 23, 2017. The ceremony was attended by representatives from the Federal Ministry of Health, UNFPA, USAID, Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia, Gondar University, Jimma University and other partner organizations. Fistula survivors, who are currently under treatment at the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital, were also in the attendance.

the common goal of ending fistula and restoring women's dignity. The more understanding and action we generate today, the more we can look forward to a future where obstetric fistula becomes a history of the past." He added, "By all standards, nationally and globally, Dr. Catherine Hamlin and her late husband Dr. Reginald Hamlin take much of the

On his welcoming speech Dr. Tesfaye Yacob, HFE CEO, said, "I believe the





credit in the fight against fistula. Over the past 50 plus years, Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia has treated more than 50, 000 fistula patients and reintegrated the majority of them back into their communities.”

H.E. Dr. Eshetu Kebede, representative from the Federal Ministry of Health, on his part, said that the Ministry has considered obstetric fistula as a major childbirth injury in its Health Transformation Plan, and is working cooperatively with all its partners to address the issue. He also expressed his

appreciation to the leading role that Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia is playing in the fight against obstetric fistula altogether from Ethiopia.

Presentation, discussion, fistula testimonial and press conference were also parts of the day.

I believe the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital, perhaps anywhere else in the world, is the right place to celebrate the day ...

Dr. Tesfaye Yacob, HFE CEO

Fistula Day at Hamlin Mekelle Center

Mekelle Hamlin Fistula Center, in collaboration with Tigray Regional Health Bureau and elementary school students and teachers, also celebrated International Fistula Day to End Obstetric Fistula on May 23, 2017. “It was a successful celebration. Apart from creating awareness on obstetric fistula, we successfully operated 50 POP cases,” said Dr. Melaku Abreha, Senior Fistula Surgeon and Head of the Center.



Set aside by the United Nations, the day is meant to rally support and draw attention to activities targeting the elimination of fistula around the world.

According to UNFPA, the theme of this year’s celebration, “Hope, healing, and dignity for all,” is a call to realize the fundamental human rights of all women and girls everywhere, with a special focus on those most left behind, excluded and shunned by society.

The day was observed for the first time in 2013.

International Fistula Day	Theme
2013	End the Shame; End the Isolation; End Fistula
2014	Tracking Fistula- Transforming Lives
2015	End Fistula, Restore Women’s Dignity
2016	Ending Fistula Within a Generation
2017	Hope, Healing, and Dignity for All

HCM Holds 7th Round Graduation Ceremony

The Hamlin College of Midwives (HCM) graduated 20 female candidates, 7th batch since its establishment in 2007, with BSc Degree in Midwifery on Saturday, July 15, 2017 at its College's Compound. Families, friends, staff, Board of Trustees, and



representatives from partner organizations, embassies and the government, as well as honored guests from overseas attended the ceremony and celebrated the graduates' accomplishments as they completed a significant step in midwifery education.

Dean of the College, Ato Zelalem Belete, along with Hamlin's Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Tesfaye Yacob, and

Co-founder, Dr. Catherine Hamline, presided over the College's seventh-graduation ceremony. "This is a tremendous milestone that you have reached," Ato Zelalem said, while congratulating the graduates for their successful achievements. "One thing that you have gotten here at Hamlin College of Midwives –in addition to your subject matter-is serving your community to the best you can. That requires compassion, dedication, commitment and

belongingness. I'm glad that you've all this," he noted. "These 20 graduates will raise the total number of skilled female midwives to 125, trained and deployed by the College since 2007," he further noted.





Chief Executive Officer of Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia, Dr. Tesfaye Yacob, also spoke at the ceremony. “Congratulations for you’ve officially joined today the oldest profession in human history. Through your respected practices, you are contributing to the final task of eliminating Obstetric Fistula and transforming the services of Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia towards Comprehensive Maternal Health Service Unit,” he said.

“The main thing I hope you have learnt from your training here and from our hospitals is to love. If you love your work you will put your mind and hearts into it, and soon find that you enjoy your work , and so it will not be a burden, but a joy as

you witness and help a new baby to be born and join this world’s population,” Dr. Catherine Hamlin, co-founder of the Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia, addressed the graduates.

Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia oversees the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital and its five regional centers, the Hamlin College of Midwives, and the Hamlin Rehabilitation and Reintegration Training Center (Desta Mender). The Hamlin College of Midwives was established in 2007, and has so far graduated more than 125 skilled female midwives with BSc Degree and deployed them back into their communities.

Rehabilitating the Environment and Renewing Our Promise

Desta Mender meaning joy village is a big breathtaking green and bushy site located in the western outskirts of the capital, Addis Abeba, where Hamlin Reintegration and Rehabilitation Center and Hamlin College of Midwives are based.



A team consisting of HFE staff members, fistula survivors and volunteers have planted nearly 500 trees on the hillside of the compound and vowed to keep involved in the fight against fistula. Mrs Beletshachew, HFE Rehabilitation and Reintegration Manager and organizer of the event thanked all the participants, and said, “The event enables us to sustain our environment, and renew, at the same time, our promise of eradicating obstetric fistula from Ethiopia.”

The Rehabilitation and Reintegration Unit based at Desta Mender has been rehabilitating not just the poor fistula survivors, but its surrounding environment as well. Every year, in the rainy season, the team at Desta Mender organizes a tree plantation program. This year’s event was held on Saturday, August 12, 2017 with a theme “Eradicating Fistula from Ethiopia”.



Swimming for a Cause: The ChaCha Team Adventure



saw women of almost in my age had been suffering from the traumatic birth injury which I never thought of it to happen, I immediately decided to support this work in any way I could. This is how the idea of ChaCha Team began,”

said the 17 year old Theodosia Catsiapis, one of the team members.

Some run marathons; others walk on bare foot; some others swim lakes; but all for one big cause, helping the poor women suffering from the traumatic birth injury. Without the full engagement of all our supporters, such life changing work couldn't be possible at all.

Recently, a fund-raising adventure for this big cause was successfully completed in the Switzerland. A group of eight teenagers, named the ChaCha Team, have crossed the cold Geneva Lake swimming end to end aiming at raising funds for fistula surgery.

“It was two years back that I got the chance of visiting the amazing work at the Addis Abeba Fistula Hospital, and when I

Back home, Theodosia told her friends at school about the sufferings of young Ethiopian women she saw. No one said no to her request for support. The eight willing teenagers, including herself, have started preparing for their biggest life challenge-swimming the cold and long river full of scary water creatures. The ChaCha team, through this adventure, has raised awareness on obstetric fistula, and of course managed to raise 76, 000 USD for Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia.

Being the youngest of the ChaCha Team, Theodosia , accompanied by our Swiss Trust member Lisa, has arrived at the Addis Abeba Fistula Hospital to

handover the donation in a ceremony held on July 13 afternoon where Dr Catherine and other staff members were in attendance.

“You are a teenage, but matured enough to care for others in need. I thank you and all your team members for the commitment you’ve shown to help the big cause that my husband and I have devoted our lives to,” said Dr Catherine during the donation ceremony.

With the donation, 100 fistula patients will get holistic care and be reintegrated



back into their communities with full dignity. The rest of the money is for sponsoring one student at the Hamlin College of Midwives for the whole four years degree training in Midwifery.



Beyond the Treatment: Hamlin's Life Changing Impact



village, the villagers get such services after hours of walk to the closest market town.

A year after the marriage, Belaynesh got pregnant, and it was happy news for all the family. Without visiting any health facility during her pregnancy, Belaynesh went to her mother's place for home delivery. In between, she heard shocking news about the death of her husband who was

She was lucky to start school, but unlucky to dropout at grade 5. It was, and it is, a belief in most rural families that 'a girl as old as Belaynesh should get married.' Her family decided then that she should discontinue her education and get married. She was only 15 by then.

Belaynesh, who now estimates her age to 30, was born from agrarian family in the remote rural village named Sike, in the South. As there is lack of basic infrastructures like health facilities in the

traveling far away from the village looking for a job to collect some money for the prospected baby.

While Beaynesh was in grief, her due date arrived and she started laboring. After four days of labor, she became unconscious, and her parents rushed her to the nearby health facility, about 6 hours bus drive. After being under coma for two days, Belaynesh found herself lying on a soaked bed at the closest government hospital. The doctors helped

her give birth to a stillborn, but the situation left her with double fistula and leg contracture as well.

Back home, Belaynesh spent two painful years constantly leaking and lying on a bare mud floor. “In those two years, my father lost almost all his assets looking for a cure that works for me. I isolated myself from the community. I was crying day-in and day-out. I wanted to help my father who had lost everything because of me, but my legs denied me. I gave up all my hopes,” Belaynesh recalls.

One day, during a funeral service of a villager, her father learned about our Yirgalem Center in the South and brought her the next morning for treatment. Belaynesh stayed at the center for almost four years, receiving full support and treatment from our medical staff. “During my stay at Yirgalem, my legs showed significant improvement,” Belaynesh thanks the staff.

As her case was more complex, Belaynesh was brought to our main hospital in Addis Abeba. She stayed at the hospital for about a year under various treatment procedures. The second and final difficult diversion surgery she received 7 years

back was successful enough to cure Belaynesh, but with serious follow ups for the rest of her life. Because of the seriousness of the fistula injury Belaynesh sustained, she was made to be one of the few resident patients permanently living in our rehabilitation center (Desta Mender).

During her 7 years stay so far at Desta Mender, Belaynesh has gone under different trainings, including vegetables farming, dairy farming and hospitality. She is now Hamlin staff and works as a bakery in student canteen at the Hamlin College of Midwives. “Who else would give such holistic care except the Almighty? Thanks to Him and Emaye (Dr. Catherine), and all others. I’m leading a happier & healthier life than ever,” Belaynesh says.





Get Involved

Join Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia's effort to END FISTULA. If you want to find out about ways of getting involved, or have any questions about Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia, please contact us.

Editor's Note

The **HAMLIN Newsletter** is published quarterly for the staff, partners, volunteers and visitors of Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia. Comments, suggestions and story ideas are welcome.

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