

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

## **HAMLIN COLLEGE OF MIDWIVES: An Uninterrupted History of 100% Pass of Its Graduates in the National Midwife Licensing Examination**



### **INSIDE**

- |                                 |   |                                  |    |
|---------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|----|
| • NSW Senior Australian of 2018 | 2 | • Strategic Plan                 | 7  |
| • Yebego Sew                    | 3 | • College's Recognition          | 8  |
| • FIGO Meeting                  | 4 | • Yirgalem Hamlin Fistula Center | 9  |
| • 2017 Hamlin Adventure         | 5 | • My Story                       | 10 |
| • Q1 Review Meeting             | 6 |                                  |    |

## Dr. Catherine Named NSW Senior Australian of 2018



Dr. Catherine Hamlin has been named 'New South Wales (NSW) Senior Australian of the Year for 2018'. Dr. Catherine, 93, was recognized for her decades of service for the young Ethiopian women suffering from obstetric fistula. The organization, Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia, founded by Dr. Catherine and her late husband, Dr. Reginald, has treated more than 50,000 women with childbirth-related injuries and reintegrated the majority of them back into their communities.

Medical scientists, inventors, a surf

therapist, a teacher, rural community leaders, a playschool legend and cycling cancer fundraisers are among the nominees for the 2018 NSW Australian of the Year Awards. The nominees are among 130 other Australians being recognized at a state level in the annual awards.

The Senior Australian of the Year Award recognizes those Australians aged 65 and over who continue to achieve and contribute. The award commenced in the International Year of Older Persons in 1999.

## Dr. Catherine Receives '2017 Yebego Sew Shilimat': One of the Highest Awards in Ethiopia



Dr. Catherine Hamlin won the '2017 Yebego Sew Shilimat' (literally translated as the Good Person Award), yearly Ethiopian prize for the life time best achievements. During the award ceremony, held on September 3, 2017 at the Intercontinental Hotel, Addis Ababa, Dr. Catherine expressed her happiness for receiving the award. "I am greatly honored to be receiving this award. I did not make the journey here alone. Numerous people have supported me along the way. I thank you."

Dr. Catherine received the award

winning the category of foreigners who have devoted their lives for the well-being of fellow Ethiopians, one of the 11 award categories for the year. Sir Bob Geldof and Prof Jacob Schneider were among nominees who competed in the category.

'Yebego Sew Shilimat' is a prominent award institution in Ethiopia intended in recognizing the work of individuals with extraordinary contributions for Ethiopians. This year's award is the 5th round since 2012.

## HFE Hosts FIGO Meeting

Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia (HFE) hosted a two-day-interactive meeting, organized by the International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO), at the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital, from September 2-3, 2017. The meeting, attended by more than 30 participants from all over the world, aims to prepare experienced fistula surgeons in their role as FIGO Accredited Trainers, and to assist them to train and coach FIGO Fellows using the FIGO and Partners Standardized Global Competency-Based Fistula Surgery Training Manual.

In his opening remark, Dr. Tesfaye Yacob, HFE CEO, indicated that Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia is one of the prominent training centers of FIGO, adding that HFE and FIGO should cherish and harness their partnership.

Representing the Federal Ministry of Health, Ato Sintayehu Abebe, welcomed the trainees and thanked HFE and FIGO for their contributions in improving the maternal health services of the country. He added, “Ethiopia has been implementing a five-year-strategic plan to end obstetric fistula and has so far

secured remarkable achievements.”

Dr. Fekade Ayenachew, Medical Director of HFE, stressed his organization’s commitment to work through the existing networks of obstetricians and gynecologists to promote an understanding of fistula globally. He also highlighted the need for such training in order to ensure the highest quality of fistula surgeries.

FIGO’s Chief Executive, Mr. Johan Vos, thanked member societies for their commitments, adding that the two-day-interactive meeting is part of FIGO’s Fistula Surgery Training Initiative. He also appreciated HFE’s efforts to end obstetric fistula altogether from Ethiopia. “The Hamlin Center is like an oasis in the middle of the desert,” he said.



## 2017 Hamlin Ethiopian Adventure

A team of 18 individuals, who were able to commit their time and enthusiasm to fundraising for Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia, joined the 2017 Hamlin Ethiopian Adventure, a unique travel opportunity whereby participants take part in the challenging 10km Great Ethiopian Run (also known as the 10km International) as part of an intimate tour of Ethiopia and Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia. Each member also succeeded in raising a minimum of \$10,000 to support



the work of Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia.

The team was warmly welcomed by HFE management team and staff on November 14, 2017 at the Addis Ababa Fistula Ethiopia. During the welcoming ceremony, Dr. Tesfaye Yacob, HFE CEO, thanked the team members for their enthusiasm and support. “You are so much touched and moved by the work of Dr. Catherine Hamlin and Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia. I assure you you’ve succeeded and realized part of your dream. I want to thank you on behalf of Hamlin Fistula

Ethiopia, Dr. Catherine Hamlin, Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia’s staff, and of course, our fistula survivors, for whom we all are here.”

In addition to participating in the 10 km Great Ethiopian Run, the team visited

the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital, the Hamlin College of Midwives, Desta Mender (Hamlin Rehabilitation and Reintegration Center) and Hamlin Bahir Dar Fistula Center.

The Great Ethiopian Run is a 10km road running event which takes place every November in Addis Ababa. Established in 2001 by Haile Gebresselassie, one of the world’s greatest long-distance runners, the event attracts more than 36, 000 participants each year, making it Africa’s biggest road race.

## HFE Holds Quarter I Review Meeting

Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia (HFE) held its Quarter I Review meeting on Friday, Oct. 27, 2017, at the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital. The meeting, attended by a total of 30 staff members, including the CEO, management team, centers' heads, fistula surgeons and mentors, provided a platform to assess the performance of the organization over the first quarter of the fiscal year.

“We’ve accomplished a lot over the quarter, and I hope we do the same over the remaining ones. This review is fundamental in the sense that it clearly shows us how much we’ve achieved, and what we might need to do as well if there is any gap in our performance,” said Dr. Tesfaye Yacob, the CEO, in his opening remark.



A total of 14 presentations, accompanied by discussions under three categories, were made. The presentations and discussions showed that the organization’s performance over the first quarter of the fiscal year is significant.

In his comprehensive report of all the programs, Monitoring and Evaluation

Officer, Ato Habtamu Atnafu, highlighted that Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia has shown substantial performance improvement during the quarter under review, as compared to the previous year of the same period.

In his welcoming speech, Dr. Demissew Beyene, Planning and Program Manager, pointed out that Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia has an exceptional culture of conducting quarterly reviews on a regular basis and making use of the outcomes of the reviews for a better performance.

## HFE Starts Implementing Five-Year Strategic Plan



Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia (HFE) has started implementing its five year strategic plan (2017-2021). The plan, anchored on strengthening the medical services for fistula patients, is developed taking into consideration the current HFE resources and potential opportunities.

HFE's Planning and Program Manager, Dr. Demissew Beyene, said that the strategic plan was developed through a series of consultations with various levels of management including the Board and selected staff. The plan features strengthening five strategic focus areas: patient centered high standard and compassionate health services; national capacity building and preventive programs to improve

maternal and newborn wellbeing and survival; evidence-based practices; administration–financial systems and professional standards; and networking and resource mobilization, he added.

Professor Yemane Berihan, the chief consultant, highlighted that the five strategic themes are aligned with the Government of Ethiopia's Health Sector Transformation Plan (HSTP) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

Dr. Tesfaye Yacob, the CEO, called for all Hamlin staff, trustees and stakeholders to join hand in hand for the successful implementation of the plan over the coming five years. "Together we have an opportunity in the coming years to continue doing the very practical work that will ensure the legacy of Dr. Catherine Hamlin and Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia. We need the strategic plan in order to be the best that we can be," he emphasized.

## HCM Recognized as 'Model of Excellence'

The Federal Ministry of Health has recognized Hamlin College of Midwives (HCM) as a Model College in the Midwifery Education in Ethiopia. The College has an uninterrupted history of 100% pass of its graduates in the National Midwife Licensing Examination, which ensures that any midwife graduate in Ethiopia has achieved at least a common standard of medical knowledge and clinical skills competencies.

"Being recognized is exciting and provides validation that our work is valuable and moving us in the right direction," said Ato Zelalem Belete, Dean of the College, while congratulating all the Hamlin's community for the success and recognition.

The College, under the umbrella of Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia, commenced its program in 2007, aiming to produce well qualified and clinically competent midwives who are able to improve options for a safe delivery for women in rural areas. It follows its own unique way of selecting and training female students from rural areas of Ethiopia, and has succeeded so much so in the process and reached to the extent of developing the 'Hamlin Model of Teaching and Learning'.

"Young girls, who have genuine interest in maternal health and have successfully completed grade 12, are selected and offered scholarship to train at the College and return to their home rural communities to offer services after completing the 4-year-curriculum in midwifery," said Ato Ababu Yassin, Lecturer and Deployment Head at the College. "The midwife graduates are supported in the government system by a supply chain for medications and necessary materials," he added.

Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency (HERQA), which assesses and evaluates the quality of higher education in Ethiopia, also published in its 2013 Report that Hamlin College of Midwives has been contributing immensely to the health sector by offering a quality program aiming at alleviating the chronic shortage of midwives in the rural parts of Ethiopia.





## Yirgalem Hamlin Fistula Center – One among the Five Hamlin’s Regional Fistula Hospitals

The small but historic town of Yirgalem is sited at about 300 kms away from the capital Addis Abeba in the southern part of Ethiopia. When Hamlin’s plan of establishing five outreach treatment centers to reaching fistula victims in every corner was started some 15 years ago, Yirgalem was identified as the center of addressing South Ethiopia.



Following the challenging steps of finding resources, the center was made open for service in November 2006 with its fully capacitated facility. Since its opening, tens of thousands of poor rural women with fistula in the region, not able to travel long to Addis Abeba and not have anyone to accompany them either, have been accessing the treatment in a relatively close distance.

The center is staffed with 42 employees of whom 16 are nurse aids and 5 are health professionals (nurses and health officers). With its maximum annual treatment capacity of 400 cases in 38 beds, it is serving the 20 million total population of the Southern Nations and Nationalities Peoples Region (SNNPR) and the neighboring estimated 2 million population of south Oromiya region. As to the reports from the center, 3, 212 operations have been performed so far, of which 2,578 are fistula surgeries and

98 Caesarean Section (CS) for cured ex fistula women who became pregnant again and revisited the center for safe delivery. The remaining surgeries are of public organ prolapse and minor procedures.

Located inside the compound of the government hospital, Yirgalem Hamlin Fistula Center is sharing resources such as professionals, equipment and pharmaceuticals with the hospital. Head of the center, Ato Amare Desta, an experienced health professional himself, says that the center is strategically located in the south Ethiopia, and remains one of the busiest Hamlin outreach centers with many fistula sufferers being treated. “There are 7 Hamlin supported government health centers under our supervision, and our midwives are currently leading the maternal health care services in those centers,” he adds.

## From Fistula Patient to College Student



Eskedar Mekonon, 27, was born and raised in a rural part of Gojjam, north Ethiopia, where access to basic social services was a challenge. Eskedar, like many of her friends, was never sent to school, but was given to a husband only at 5. It was a traditional practice in her community that girls as young as five were ‘married’ to teenage boys or older men, but would stay at their parents’ homes as married girls until they would reach 10 and join their husbands.

After fully joining her husband at 10, she became pregnant. For the little girl Eskedar being pregnant was as simple as playing with peers. As months passed

by, however, she started feeling some pain. The due date arrived, and she labored for two painful days. On the third day, she was taken to the closest small clinic, but it was too late and she was referred to the nearby hospital. At the hospital, she gave birth to a stillborn baby through surgery. It was a miracle that she survived, but became incontinent.

“For over a month at the hospital, I totally lost control over my own body. I used to be seated or move around only with the support of my mother. Knowing that I was incontinent worsened my life, and I preferred death to living. I was

ashamed of myself,” Eskedar remembers.

Eskedar stayed another four months of agony and depression at home but under a fully good care of her mother. She visited our main hospital in Addis Ababa some 13 years back. Her first surgery was not successful enough, and she was discharged still incontinent. She stayed with her mother’s close relatives in Addis regularly visiting our hospital and receiving professional support on ways of managing the incontinent and leading normal life.

Being with her relatives, she began her elementary school at the age of 13. “If someone at the school came to know my condition, I would get stigmatized and drop out from school. But I didn’t let that happen. While in class I wouldn’t drink much water, but only focused on my education. I completed grade 12 and scored a good point in the National Entrance Examination, enough to help me join a higher learning institution,” she recalls.

Six months ago, luckily enough, she became dry for the first time after for over 10 years of suffering. Dr. Renate, the German Urologist and longtime supporter of Hamlin, and Dr. Fekade, the Medical Director, diagnosed Eskedar again and gave her the second and final diversion surgery which totally let her dry.

“As this is my second home, I came to the hospital and consulted Hamlin staff about my life challenge. They responded positively as usual and allowed me to stay at Desta Mender. They covered my education fee and enabled me to start my long-dream of studying a degree program in accounting,” Eskedar says.

Now Eskedar, who is living at Desta Mender, is a first-year student majoring in Accounting at one of the private colleges in Addis Ababa. She is spending her spare time reading books and teaching patients under the rehabilitation program at Desta Mender. “After graduation, my dream is to help my mother and educate my community. I want to change all the traditional practices in my community for good. There are so many rural girls facing all the life challenges I’ve gone through.”





### 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.

Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia, Communications Department

Phone: +251 113 720083

Fax: +251 113 726253

E-mail: [enquiries@hamlinfistula.org](mailto:enquiries@hamlinfistula.org)

Website: [www.hamlinfistula.org](http://www.hamlinfistula.org)

P.O.Box: 3609, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia



*Designed & Printed by Everest Printers*