



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

MY STORY ...

another day, another life



INSIDE

Dr. Catherine's 94 th Birthday	2
QII Review Meeting	3
IMF Director's Visit	4
Dr. Taffara Deguefe's Donation	5
OR Lamps	7
Solar Suitcase Project	8
My story	10

'94 Years Young'



The 94th Birthday of the selfless Dr. Catherine Hamlin was warmly celebrated at the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital's compound on Wednesday, January 24, 2018. She was joined by Hamlin staff, college students, fistula survivors and invited guests.

On her thank you speech, Dr Catherine said, "Before I was here I was talking with Richard, my son, on phone, and I told him nothing was going on to celebrate my birthday, but I was mistaken. You've come with such a beautiful surprise. Thank you for this hot birthday celebration of an old woman. I'll call Richard later and tell him that I was mistaken."

Dr. Tesfaye Yacob, the CEO, expressed his happy birthday wishes to Dr. Catherine on behalf of all the staff, students and fistula survivors. "We all have big respect for what you've done for the poor women of our country over the past years, and we all are working together to

realize your dream of a world without fistula. We wish you a long and healthy life," he added.

She spent enjoyable day with all the staff, students and fistula survivors, cut the big 94 cake, and received birthday presents.



Quarter II Review Meeting

Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia (HFE) held its Quarter II Review meeting on Tuesday, January 30, 2018, at the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital. The meeting, attended by a total of 25 staff members, including the CEO, management team, centers' heads, fistula surgeons, mentors, provided a platform to assess the performance of the organization over the second quarter of the fiscal year.

In his welcoming speech, Dr. Demissew Beyene, Planning and Program Manager, pointed out that the quarterly review meeting is a session to learn from our plan for a better performance. "It gives us an opportunity to ask ourselves: 'Where did we succeed, where did we come up short and why?'" he added.

"The review enables us to evaluate over performance, and identify challenges and ways to improve them. We need to wrestle our challenges to the ground and develop action plans to achieve results," said Dr. Tesfaye Yacob, the CEO, in his opening remark.

A total of 15 presentations, accompanied by discussions under three categories, were made. The presentations and discussions showed an improvement in the

performance of the organization during the second quarter, despite some challenges. In his comprehensive report of all the programs, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, Ato Habtamu Atnafu, suggested that all program managers need to design catchup plans for the remaining quarters of the fiscal year.

The participants shared successes, challenges, lessons learned and recommendations.



Key achievements during the QUARTER

- Better coverage of short acting FP, ANC 4th visit and PMTCT services
- No maternal death
- Lower still births
- Total OPD services ↑sed from 69% to 83%
- Total surgery procedures ↑sed from 61% to 76%
- Reintegration of patients improved

IMF Director Visits Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital

Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Ms. Christine Lagarde, visited the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital on Friday, December 15, 2017. Upon her arrival at the hospital, she was most cordially welcomed by HE Professor Yifru Berhane, Minister of Health, Dr. Mengistu Asnake, Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia (HFE) Board Member, Dr. Tesfaye Yacob, HFE CEO, and other HFE Management Team and staff members.

Speaking at the occasion, she appreciated the tireless effort of Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia in helping women suffering from fistula and underlined that health is one of the top priorities of IMF. “We, at the International Monetary Fund, are trying to help stability from a financial point of view, with prosperity from an economic point of view and we know very well that nothing happens without peace, without health and without education. And if I have to pick and

choose the three forces that can help societies, it would be those three. And you're clearly contributing to the second one yourself and all those you have inspired to join you and contribute to the Hamlin Fistula Hospital.”



Following her tour of the hospital facility, guided by Dr. Fekade Ayenachew, the Medical Director, she met with Dr. Catherine Hamlin, founder of the HFE, and attended a short briefing on the work of the organization by Dr. Tesfaye Yacob.

His Excellency Proferssor Yifru Berhane thanked Ms. Lagarde for her visit and indicated that Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia is playing the leading role in the fight against fistula.

Donating the Only Family Home: In Recognition of the Selfless Efforts of the Hamlins

In recognition of the selfless efforts and world class services of the founders of the Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia, the late Dr. Taffara Deguefe, first appointed Governor of the National Bank of Ethiopia, had an expressed intention to give to the hospital his only family residence in Addis Ababa. His only surviving children, Belaineh Taffara Deguefe and Taitu Taffara Deguefe, both Canadian citizens, have transferred their inherited house to Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia.

Dr. Tesfay Yacob, HFE CEO, expressed his appreciation for the late Dr. Taffara and thanked his surviving children for their initiation and effort to transfer the residence to Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia. "Dr. Taffara passed away before he could formally proceed with his intention to transfer the property to the Hospital, but his children, Belaineh and Taitu, have supported their father's intention and transferred the property to Hamlin. I truly thank them on behalf of Dr. Catherine Hamlin and her late husband, Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia's staff, and all our fistula survivors," he added.

Dr. Taffara Deguefe passed away in Vancouver, Canada, in 2015.



About Dr. Taffara Deguefe

- He was born in the hamlet of Genda-Wuha, Ankober district, Northern Shoa, Ethiopia on June 15, 1926.
- In 1934, he was enrolled in l'Alliance Francaise and thus began the first step towards a modern day education.
- In 1944, at the age of 18, he began his first job as a filing clerk with the State Bank of Ethiopia.
- With the approval of the Emperor,

in 1945, the Governor of the State Bank organized a program to send eleven young employees abroad for education and training and Taffara was selected as one of the trainees.

- In 1958, Taffara was appointed manager of the newly created branch of the State Bank of Ethiopia in Khartoum.
- In 1961, he was promoted to the position of Manager of the State Bank of Ethiopia – the first Ethiopian to hold this position.
- In 1974, he was granted a Doctor of Laws, honoris causa by the University of British Columbia.
- During the revolutionary upheavals in Ethiopia of 1974, Taffara was appointed Governor of the

National Bank. During the difficult transition that followed under the military government, he was arrested and put under political detention for five years and seven months.

- He left Ethiopia in 1982 and has lived in voluntary exile ever since.
- From 1982 to 1994, he worked as a financial adviser and banking consultant in Swaziland and Zimbabwe.
- He retired to Vancouver in 1994 at the age of 68.
- Between 1994 and 2015, he returned several times to Ethiopia as a guest for the inauguration of private banks, anniversary celebrations, and international meetings.



Modern Surgery Lamps to the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital

Antoine's last wish:

"Sell all my paintings and send the proceeds to Ethiopia!"

The late well-known Dutch painter Antoine van den Wildenberg and his wife Wies have a long history of relationship with Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia, and have been loyal donors of the Hamlin Fistula Netherlands Foundation for years. In 2014, Antoine sadly passed away, and his last wish he expressed on his deathbed was "Sell all my paintings and send the proceeds to Ethiopia!"

So as to realize his wish, his wife Wies and her sons Frits and Stan, and daughter Floor, along with our long term trustee in the Netherlands Dr. Barbara Kwasat, have been working for years. At the end

of June 2017, the family and Dr. Barbara arrived at the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital and handed over two modern OR lamps bought, in consultation with our medical team, from the sale of Mr. Antoine's art works.

"The lamps are now successfully installed and assisting us in our life-changing surgeries. They are playing an important role in the quality of care the hospital is known for. My heartfelt thanks to Mr. Antoine's family in the name of the poor women we are treating and the whole Hamlin staff. May his sole rest in peace,"



said Dr. Fekade Ayenachew, HFE Medical Director, while acknowledging the commitment of the family.

On the arms of the lamps, the following message reads:

*"Bright light for Hamlin Fistula Hospital to continue this beautiful work;
In loving memory of Antoine van den Wildenberg, from his family"*

A SOLAR SUITCASE :

It is a kit with inside an easy to operate buttons, a Doppler, digital machine to count the pulse of the unborn infant, a charger plugs to charge mobiles one at a time and headlamps. It also includes two solar panels that are mounted on a clinic's roof and connected to high-quality LED lights. Once fully charged, it can provide light for up to 20 hours.

Hamlin's Solar Suitcase Project: Saving Mothers and Babies during Childbirth

Electricity is crucial for life-saving obstetric care. Pregnancy complications claim the lives of mothers and newborns each year, mostly in Africa and Asia, in regions without reliable electricity. The World Health Organization reported in 2013 that among eight sub-Saharan Africa nations, only 28% of health facilities had reliable electricity.

Although Ethiopia has shown a remarkable improvement in providing

reliable electricity in the last two decades, there are still many rural villages without electric power and other basic social services. Even in those villages with electric power, the power is not constant, and repeatedly cuts off.

The unavailability and/or constant cut-off electric power have a huge impact on the maternal care system. There times when the lives of mothers and babies are at risk simply because of a lack of reliable electricity. Pregnant women often arrive at the health centers with severe complications, but without adequate light to treat them, procedures have to be compromised or delayed until daylight.



It is with this understanding that Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia (HFE), following an agreement with Green Lamp, the donor, started its Solar Suitcase Project four years back. According to Dr. Demissew Beyene, HFE Planning and Program Manager, the goal of the project is to ensure that mothers give births in healthcare facilities that are capacitated by the installation of solar suitcases in the delivery wards of rural centers to have adequate lighting and power.

Since 2014, the start of the project as a pilot, Hamlin has installed 216 solar suitcases in 216 government health centers, without electric power or showing big cut-offs. A short training on how to

use is given to the midwives during the installation, said Ato Abebayehu H/Selassie, HFE Solar Suitcase Project Coordinator, adding that one technical person from a government regional or zonal health bureau is also trained on the maintenances.

Studies show that solar suitcase is an economical compact solar electric system for medical lighting, mobile communication and essential medical devices. Once installed, the midwives can identify pregnancy complications, conduct routine and emergency obstetric care without delay, and provide life-saving care with greater confidence during night shifts.





Mekdes, who is originally from a small rural village around the historical city of Gondar, north Ethiopia, is now 23. At 15, a year after her marriage, she faced with some life challenges: lost her first child, encountered fistula, and suffered leg injury.

Immediately after the marriage, she became pregnant, and it was happy news for the families and friends on both sides. She was, accompanied by her husband, walking for seven hours each month to the closest clinic for prenatal follow up. The nine months of pregnancy went very well until the first sign of the labor. “The nurses at the clinic thought I wouldn’t survive.

They gave up and sent me back to my village,” Mekdes recalls.

With no other option, Mekdes returned to home. She spent another three painful days without any outcome. Frustrated by the situation, her family took her to another clinic, a day long walking distance from their village. On the way to the clinic, Mekdes gave to a stillbirth. It was a relief from the six unbearable painful days, but short lived as the situation left her with double fistula.

Two weeks after the encounter, her uncle brought her to the Bahir Dar Hamlin Fistula Center. As her case was severe, she

was referred to the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital. “I never thought of getting cured until I arrived at the main hospital. It was like reconstructing my body. The fistula stopped, and I was able to move my body, walk to bathroom and clean myself,” she says.

More to the fistula, Mekdes faced a motorcycle accident that resulted in bad injury on her left leg. Luckily, the complex fistula surgery she had remains unaffected. “I burst into tears whenever I think of the challenges I’ve gone through and the support I’ve received from Hamlin staff. I truly thank all, and of course, Emaye (Dr. Catherine), who is always behind all and has brought all together. I’m much happier. It is another day, and another life,” Mekdes explains.

After two unsuccessful operations, Mekdes finally received a diversion surgery that totally cured her. Since then, she has been leading a happy life with the caring husband who has always been on her side in all those sufferings.



On Dr. Catherine’s 94th birthday celebration, Mekdes gave a present, handmade scarf by herself, to Dr. Catherine. It was very emotional for all to watch as she hugged and kissed Dr. Catherine.



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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