

The **HAMLIN** Newsletter

Hamlin
Fistula
Ethiopia



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60

ANNIVERSARY

1959–2019





The Work of a Life Time

Dr Catherine Hamlin has devoted her life to providing repair surgery for obstetric fistula in Ethiopia. She graduated in medicine at the University of Sydney in 1946 at the age of 22 and subsequently gained qualifications in gynaecology and obstetrics. She and her late husband, Dr Reg Hamlin, first arrived in Ethiopia to train midwives in 1959, but soon became aware of the problem of obstetric fistula among women living in rural areas.

On the evening of their arrival, the Hamlins were doing their best to settle into their new home, when a fellow gynecologist came to visit. That doctor described obstetric fistula to the Hamlins, neither of whom had ever seen an obstetric fistula before. "To us they were an academic rarity," Catherine recalls in her book, *The Hospital by the River*. Before the Hamlins came to Addis Ababa, there was no treatment available for fistula victims any where in the world. Most such injured women – and there were thousands – had suffered in silence for years. Reginald and Catherine quickly began to learn everything they could about obstetric fistula, a condition that had all but disappeared

in the United States in 1895, when the first fistula hospital closed its doors in New York. The Hamlins perfected a surgical technique to mend the injuries, while continuing to treat a broad range of obstetric cases

That three-year assignment evolved into the work of a lifetime, and the establishment of the hospital where women suffering from fistula could be treated for free, receiving not just top-notch medical care but also more long-term therapy to enable them to live independent lives and, perhaps, become mothers again.

Today, 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 Center (Desta Mender).





Princess Tsehai Memorial Hospital

...where the Hamlins first came

"... We have devoted particular attention to the material and physical well-being of our people through a programme for public health. Today, we are opening and dedicating to the memory of our regretted and well-beloved daughter, the Princess Tsehai Memorial Hospital which will not only provide for the treatment of mothers and children but will, also, constitute the first centre of medical instruction and training in Ethiopia..."

H.I.M. Haile Selassie I.
November 3, 1951



Princess Tsehai was born in Addis Ababa. She often accompanied the Emperor to public events during his exile in Great Britain (1936–1941), where she trained as a nurse at London's Great Ormond Street Hospital for Sick Children. She graduated as a state registered children's nurse on 25 August 1939. After the restoration of her father in 1941, she married Lieutenant-General (later Brigadier-General) Lij Abiye Abebe, and moved with him to Welega Province when he was appointed governor there.

Princess Tsehai, the Emperor's youngest surviving daughter, herself died when living up-country with her provincial governor husband. She died in Nekemte on 17 August 1942, from complications during childbirth. Her baby did not survive.

Emperor Haile Selassie founded the Princess Tsehai Memorial Hospital in her memory, which also served as a nursing school. After the 1974 revolution, the hospital was renamed the Armed Forces General Hospital.

"We wanted to work in a developing country needing doctors before we returned to settle in Australia eventually. So we responded to an advertisement in the Lancet medical journal for a gynaecologist to work in Ethiopia and were both accepted to spend 3-4 years there working at the "Princess Tsehai Memorial Hospital" set up by the Emperor Haile Selassie in memory of his daughter, Princess Tsehai, trained in England as a nurse. This was when we worked for many years and when we met many women arriving with an "obstetric fistula" – leaking urine and sometimes bowel contents as well."

Dr Catherine Hamlin

6 decades & 6 facts

HFE, co. founded by Dr Catherine Hamlin and Dr Rog Hamlin, is the only fistula hospital currently in the world.

FACT 1



HFE has treated more than 60,000 fistula patients and reintegrated the majority of them back into their communities.

FACT 2



HFE is a global center of excellence in the treatment and prevention of fistula.

FACT 3



HFE provides a complete care in the treatment, rehabilitation and reintegration, and prevention of fistula.

FACT 4



In addition to the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital, HFE has five mini hospitals, strategically located in four directions of the country.

FACT 5



HFE is currently extending its services to other parts of the world.

FACT 6



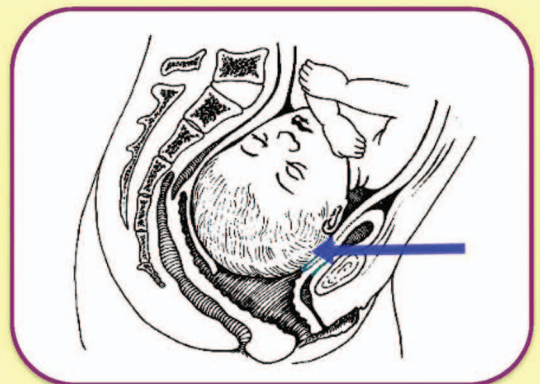
Obstetric Fistula

Obstetric fistula is a condition which occurs when a woman is in labour for four or five days. The bony head of the baby presses on the pelvis for so long that a hole develops between the vagina and the bladder or between the vagina and the rectum, resulting in urinary or faecal

incontinence. It's possible to prevent this injury by delivering the baby by caesarean section. Women with this condition are completely ostracized from society, their husbands leave them, they have no friends, because of the smell of urine or faecal matter that leaks.

How is a fistula caused?

- By prolonged obstructed labor
- Tissue compressed between the baby's head and pelvic bones dies
- The most affected area is shown on the diagram but in a few cases the rectum is also damaged





Treatment



Surgical treatment to more than 60,000 fistula patients

In addition to the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital, there are five regional Hamlin fistula centers

Urogynecology Subspecialty Training Program

FIGO Training



Prevention



Hamlin original plan of training midwives

The Hamlin College of Midwives opened in 2007

The College has so far graduated 145 midwives with BSc Degree

There are more than 66 Hamlin supported government clinics throughout the country

Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Fistula Survivors

Opened in 2002, Desta Mender is a farm and training facility

More than 20,000 fistula survivors have completed the training so far



Training includes farming skills, handcraft education, child care and business skills

Dr Catherine Hamlin believes that treating obstetric fistula patients effectively means treating the whole patient, not just the hole in their bladder.



No More Water Shortage

Installation of Pioneer Water Reservoir at the Main Hospital

Water problems also affect hospitals, and mitigating the situation is crucially important. Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia has recently installed additional water reservoir, with a carrying capacity of 110, 000 liters, in the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital to reduce the shortage and interruption of water in the facility.

the water shortage in the main hospital, and it is also a huge success as the volume of activities in the main hospital require additional water supply,” said, HFE’s A/CEO, Ato Tesfaye Mamo, while congratulating all the staff and patients for the achievement.

“The reservoir is large enough to significantly boost the hospital’s water storage capacity, and to meet all the water needs in case of shortage and interruption of supply from the municipality lines,” said HFE’s Operations Manager, Ato Tilahun Molla,



adding that the steel water reservoir is engineered up to 2.0 mm thick, and is considered the most reliable water storage currently available in the market.

The Pioneer water reservoir, which is a reliable source of clean water should municipal pipes run dry, is designed considering into account all environmental conditions such as wind, seismic, static and sloshing loads.

“The reservoir is the right mitigation for

Amarit Community Celebrates the Construction of Modern Maternity Waiting Area

Maternity waiting area improves access to care for labor and complications of pregnancy, and building maternity waiting area is, therefore, a strategy designed for inaccessible areas to facilitate the timely movement from home to health facility by diminishing barriers that inhibit access to care such as distance, geography, time of day, infrastructure, transport, and communication between referral points.

Women residing in the maternity waiting area can easily access the health facility for essential childbirth care or care for obstetric complications. A study conducted by Tegene, et al. in 2018 concludes that maternity waiting area contributes more than 80% to the reduction of maternal death and 70% to stillbirth among users in developing countries and Ethiopia.

With a financial support from Catherine Hamlin Fistula Foundation, Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia (HFE) constructed a maternity waiting area in Amarit Health Center, Amhara Region, and handed over to the community on March 28, 2019.

In his speech during the handing over ceremony, attended by HFE's Senior Management Team, representatives from Zone and Woreda Health Bureaus and



members of the community, HFE's A/CEO, Ato Tesfaye Mamo said that the construction of the maternity waiting area at Amarit Health Center will have enormous benefit to the community, particularly in improving institutional delivery and in reducing child and maternal mortality in the area.

While congratulating the community on the construction of the maternity waiting area, HFE's Prevention Manager, Ato Zelalem Belete, indicated that Amarit Health Center has achieved great results in the reduction of maternal morbidity and mortality despite challenges related to drugs and medical equipment. "I hope this modern waiting area will significantly contribute to the great results the center has achieved so far," he added.

Following the handover, members of the community and representatives from Zone and Woreda Health Bureaus were filled with pride and excitement to see their longstanding issue solved through the support from Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia.

THE FUTURE

Strategic Direction

Hamlin Specialized
Women's Hospital

Women Empowerment
Center

MSc in Clinical Midwifery



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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