


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



**Significant  
Performance  
Improvements  
in QUARTER III  
of the Fisical  
Year 2016/17**



**More Performance  
Ahead with the  
Implementation of  
Cath Up Plans**

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## 'Ethiopian Girls Award' named after Dr. Catherine Hamlin

The first ever "Ethiopian Girls Award" was colorfully held at the Mosaic Hotel, Addis Ababa, on March 20, 2017. The purpose of the award was to recognize outstanding efforts of individuals and institutions that contributed to the advancement of

education and gender equality and empowerment of girls.

This year's award is named after Dr. Catherine Hamlin, 93, founder of the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital, the world's



only medical centre dedicated exclusively to providing free obstetric fistula repair surgery to poor women suffering from childbirth injuries.

Distinguished people from International agencies, embassies, celebrities and girls

from high schools and universities attended the ceremony. It was hosted by Actress Selam Tesfaye, Wings Education & Media and its collaborators.



*W/ro Beletshachew Tadesse, HFE Reintegration & Rehabilitation Manager, speaking during the award ceremony*

## HFE Conducts Quarter III Review Meeting

### • Significant Performance Improvements in all the Programs



Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia (HFE) conducted its Third Quarter (Jan. 2017- Mar. 2017) Review Meeting on April 28, 2017 at its Head Office, Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital. Twenty staff members, including center heads, mentors and management team members participated in the meeting.

In his opening speech, Dr. Tesfaye Yacob, HFE CEO, indicated that unlike the previous quarterly review meetings, this third quarter review meeting welcomed center mentors, and hoped that

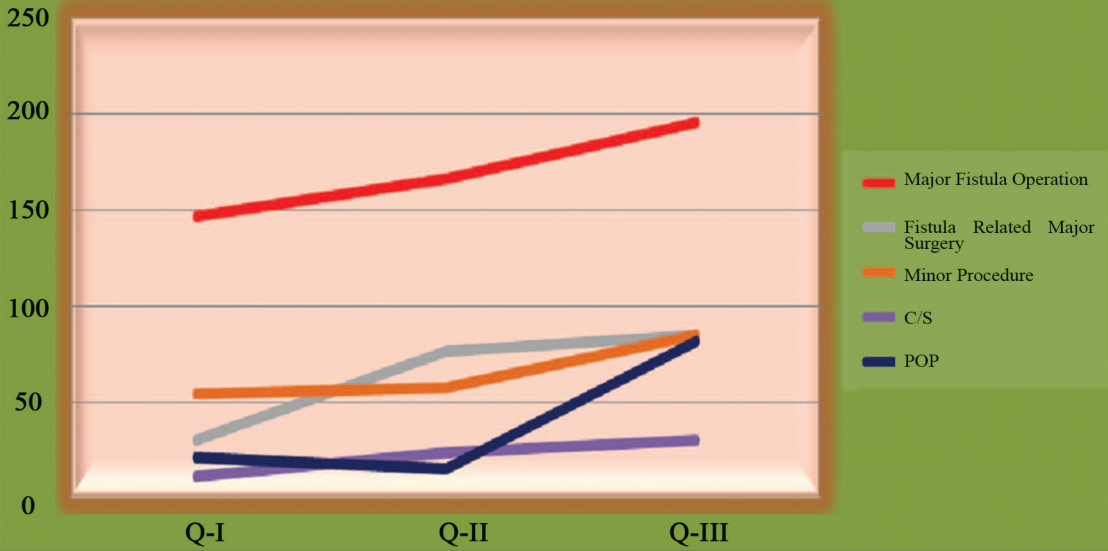
their presence would contribute a lot to the success of the meeting. He also outlined key organizational activities carried out during the quarter under review.

Being part of the long-held assessment platform at the organization, the meeting focused on discussing how far the organization accomplished during the third quarter of the fiscal year. In addition to providing a forum for all the participants to discuss on various ways to improve plan

vs performance of their respective programs, the meeting created an opportunity for all the participants to reflect on the catch up plans and the action points identified.



Surgery procedures conducted in AAFH and the five outreach fistula treatment centers over the first three quarters of 2009 EFY



Monitoring & Evaluation Officer, Center Heads, Mentors, Prevention Manager, Rehabilitation & Reintegration Manager, and Finance Manager presented their quarterly reports for discussion. It was learnt that as compared to the previous

two quarters of the fiscal year, the third quarter exhibited remarkable performance improvements in all the program areas-Treatment, Prevention, and Rehabilitation & Reintegration.



### Ambessame Health Center – One of the 36 Rural Government Clinics Working with HFE



With its prevention program, Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia (HFE) has now covered large portion of the country. The number of Hamlin supported rural government clinics has increased to 36 strategically sited in the four directions. Indeed, this has made Hamlin to be available almost everywhere in Ethiopia, easy to reach for those rural women in need of it.

Ambessame health center, one of these government clinics in the north, is located about 55 kms distance from our Bahir Dar Center and 15 kms off road drive towards west on the way to the historic city of

Gonder. The clinic by now is serving over 47 thousands population living in and around the small town of Ambessame. A very big number as compared with the country's standard ratio for health centers which is 1:25,000.

5 years ago, HFE started supporting the health center aiming at transforming the maternal health care performance of the clinic, which used to be very poor by then. In those years, four highly skilled Hamlin trained midwives have been assigned where three of them are still active. In addition to the deployment of these

professional midwives, Hamlin has renovated the whole delivery room to a standard level, and provided medical equipment such as heater and autoclave. Moreover, it has installed a solar suitcase inside the delivery room with the intention of managing night deliveries even in the absence of electric power.

By the very professional care of our midwives, the clinic has now built reputation among the community and the monthly safe deliveries attended raised to 98, a triple fold as compared to the performance ten years back. Sr. Tafetech,

one of the three Hamlin midwives working at Ambessame clinic, said, “We are here to provide all the necessary maternity support to our poor rural mothers and to continue the professional trust of our community that has already been built by our seniors.”

The only challenge of the clinic is now absence of accommodation for the midwives, one component of the Hamlin support package. With the availability of the accommodation, the midwives are able to serve their community for 24 hours.



## A Senior Hamlin Trained Midwife Working in the North

“I’m now doing what I love- helping the very poor young girls and women in my community,”

Sr. Agegnehu Lihikina



Agegnehu Lihikina, 25, was born and educated in a small rural town of Amhara region, north Ethiopia. The fact that she was among the top ranking students on high school completion, Agegnehu was granted Hamlin’s free midwifery scholarship, and graduated as one of the 4th round Hamlin graduates in 2014. During her four-year-education at Hamlin College of Midwives, Agegnehu attended more than 80 safe deliveries, big enough to prove her practical experience.

“I never had thought to study midwifery, but after I noticed the work of Hamlin and learned tens of thousands of rural women are suffering from birth related complications just because of lack of midwives, I changed my mind and studied midwifery. I’m now doing what I love- helping the very poor young girls and women in my community,” Sr. Agegnehu said.

Soon after her graduation, she was

deployed to Birakat Health Center, one of government health centers close to her birth place, in Amhara region. In the footsteps of her seniors, who also are Hamlin trained midwives, she started her career with passion- passion to help poor rural mothers of her community, and, of course, to contribute her share in the efforts to end obstetric fistula altogether.

After serving at Birakat Health Center for a year and a half, Sr. Agegnehu moved to

Wetet Abay Health Center, another Hamlin supported government clinic in the region. Along with her colleague, Sr. Siranesh, who is also Hamlin's graduate, she is now leading the maternal health care service of Wetet Abay Health Center. "I have seen two clinics in my experience so far.



Hamlin's graduates are best midwives. They can handle complicated cases with full confidence. Thank you and am proud to be trained at Hamlin," Sr. Agegnehu said.

During her four-year-education at Hamlin College of Midwives, Agegnehu attended more than 80 safe deliveries, big enough to prove her practical experience.

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## UNIVERSITY OF DUNDEE Graduation of Elinor Catherine Hamlin July 2006

Chancellor I have the honour to present  
for the degree  
of Doctor of Laws, honoris causa,  
Elinor Catherine Hamlin.

Graduation of  
Elinor Catherine Hamlin  
Doctor of Laws, honoris causa



Caird Hall • University of Dundee  
July 2006

Catherine was born in Australia and studied medicine at the University of Sydney –graduating in 1946. Not sure as to whether she should specialize in paediatrics or obstetrics, she took a resident’s post at one of the country’s leading women’s hospitals and

made a fateful appointment to interview with the medical superintendent- a certain Dr Reginald Hamlin. Catherine’s mother asked of Reg, ‘Please take good care of my daughter, she is really very frail.’ As you will see there may be many words to describe Catherine Hamlin but ‘frail’ is probably the least appropriate. May be there was some mother’s intuition involved as Mrs Nicholson handed her daughter into the care of the man that was to become her husband and partner in life. Theirs was a marriage of minds, conviction and spiritual unity and to honour one is unquestionably to honour both....

Catherine Hamlin believes she was born to serve God and the call came in 1959 as an advert in The Lancet for an obstetrician and gynaecologist on a three year contract to set up a school of midwifery for nurses in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. This was to be a three year contract for Reg and Catherine that would last more than a lifetime...

Let me describe the condition for you from words taken from Dr Hamlin’s sobering but inspirational book-The Hospital by the River,- as there may be some here who are unsure of what a fistula actually is and if it really matters. I will make no apology for the graphic picture I will paint for you, as to do otherwise would be dishonest to the fistula patients and to those who fight for their recognition and rehabilitation.

Obstructed labour in some remote part of Ethiopia , far from medical help, places a woman in terrible trouble. She may squat on

the floor of her hut or lie on a thin straw mattress, sometimes for days on end, straining to deliver her baby. An infant will not stand more than two days of being pressed upon by a uterus contracting every 5 minutes. After a time, the placenta starts to separate, the blood supply to the baby is cut off, and it dies. Once it is dead, maceration happens, where fluid from the baby is absorbed, and the skull gets smaller and collapses. She is then at last able to expel her dead child. By now the mother may have been in labour for 5-6 days, but her misery is only beginning. She may be 15 or 16 years of age or she may even be 13, but she is a married woman and without children she is nothing. Yet her



condemnation has only just begun. The pressure of the baby has cut off the blood supply to her bladder, and the tissue has died. The poor woman is left with a hole, or fistula....Because of her offensive odour, she is usually deserted by her husband and shunned by the village, condemned to a life of loneliness, destitution and shame.

These fistula patients did break Catherine's

heart on many, many occasions but they did not break her indomitable spirit. She is not fragile- she is an eternal optimist, a fighter, a survivor and a believer. Reg and Catherine began a massive fund raising and political awareness campaign and finally, 15 years later after tremendous struggle and setback, she and Reg opened the Addis Ababa Hospital. 1974 was a time of great civil upheaval in Ethiopia culminating in Emperor Haile Selassie being deposed. So, not wishing to draw any attention to their fragile new hospital there was a simple opening ceremony that took place in the sitting room of their house with a ribbon strung between two chairs which was ceremoniously cut by Reg.

The fistula hospital is the only medical center in the world where, free of charge, women receive treatment, long term care and education about prevention. They are not shunned or ridiculed but win back their dignity and pride with the help of a team that are devoted and compassionate and led by a woman of singular fortitude and humility....Now, nearly 50 years after that first calling,

Catherine Hamlin is as dedicated to her fistula pilgrims as she ever was....

Chancellor, I have the honour to invite you to confer upon Elinor Catherine Hamlin the degree of Doctor of Laws.

**Professor Sue Black**  
 Chair of Anatomy and Forensic Anthropology

## Winning Fistula after a Long Battle

"I always pray for all who have helped me as this is the only thing I can do,"

Yitatek

Yitatek was born, raised and married in a small rural village located in north Ethiopia, Wello area. She and the villagers should walk for more than two hours to reach the smallest market town with better social services including health facilities. She estimates her



and shameful to talk about. Hence, she remained at her mother's home hiding. Being ashamed of her condition, her husband divorced her and got married to another. Her brother, who was living in a small town close to our Bahir Dar Center, heard about our services on the national radio and brought her to the center. Because of the serious damage she encountered over her bladder, her first surgery at the outreach center was unsuccessful. Hopelessly, she continued the tragic life with fistula for another five years.

Five months ago, her other brother, who learned Yitatek's condition, brought her to the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital. As her case is more complex, Yitatek was made to stay and undergo different stages of treatment at the hospital for five months. Two weeks ago, she had a successful diversion surgery, and is totally dry now. "Now I'm so delighted that I'm dry. I've

successfully come out of six solid shameful years. I always pray for all who have helped me as this is the only thing I can do," Yitatek said.

age to 12 when she got married to a farmer. Like many of the young girls in the village, Yitatek never visited school.

Three years after the marriage, she got pregnant with her first child and spent the whole 9 months without visiting a clinic as there was none in her nearby. The due day arrived and she started labouring. On the 6th day of unbearable labour, Yitatek gave birth to a stillborn baby. The situation left her with urinary incontinent, a strange and shocking condition for her.

For Yitatek, the injury she had was incurable





### 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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