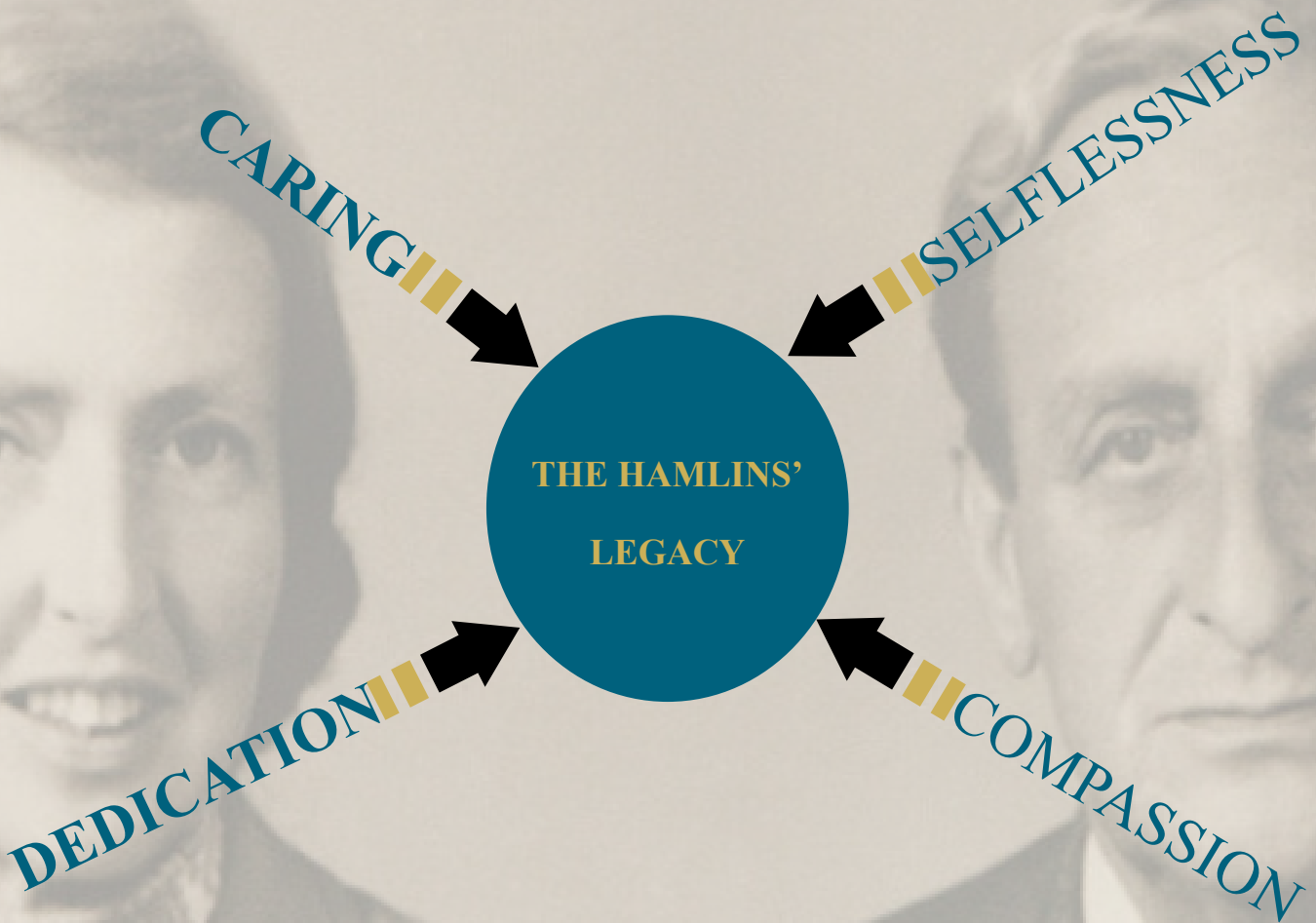


# The Hamlin Newsletter



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## Continuing the Hamlins' Legacy



*"My dream is to eradicate obstetric fistula from Ethiopia. I won't achieve this in my life time, but you can in yours."  
Dr. Catherine Hamlin, 1924-2020*

It has been over four months since the World lost one of its selfless and iconic woman – Dr Catherine Hamlin, who dedicated her entire life helping tens of thousands of poor women in Ethiopia suffering from the debilitating birth injury, fistula.

Facing the first young poor woman with fistula back in 1959 was heartbreaking for the two couple doctors, Catherine and Reg. It has changed their course of life forever. Ever since, they put aside the three years contract they signed with the government of Ethiopia and tirelessly worked to establish the present world renowned free treatment center for women with obstetric fistula.

Today, Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia has become center of excellence in the treatment and rehabilitations of fistula patients across the globe. Known for its holistic, quality and patient centered care, Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia currently 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).

But the long path of the Hamlins' success was not as simple as we may think. The loss of Dr. Reginald Hamlin in 1993 was probably the biggest challenge Dr. Catherine faced to continue their shared vision of helping the poor young Ethiopian girls and women suffering from fistula.



She once said, “I can’t have the heart to ignore the staff, whom I love most in my life, begging me to stay.”

With the strong support of Hamlin’s staff and partners, she carried on the work, expanding its services and reaching out to more girls and women with fistula throughout Ethiopia and abroad. During her 61 years of dedication to Ethiopian people, she, along with her team, scored an iconic achievement, treating and reintegrating more than 60,000 fistula patients.

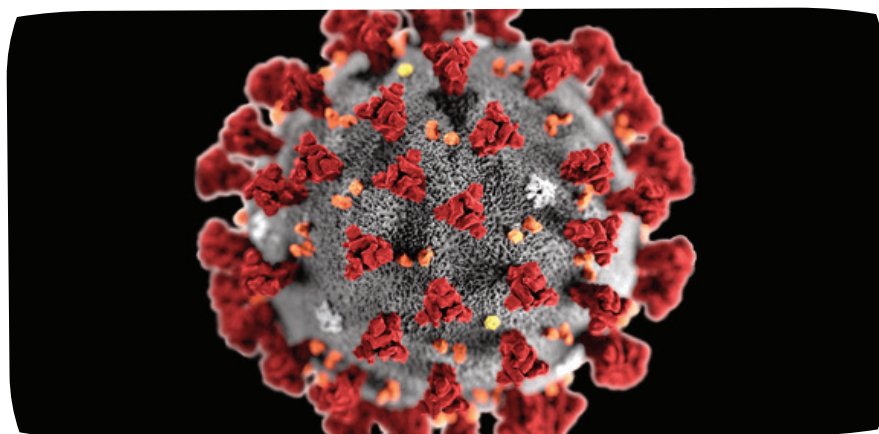
Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia’s staff and partners have fully shared her vision of eradicating obstetric fistula from Ethiopia and beyond, and vowed to continue upholding her legacy as well. “Her leg-

acy will stand as an example to all of us, and we all are committed to it. Her energy and life-long dedication to improve the lives of young girls and women will also continue to inspire generations of young people around the world,” said HFE’s CEO, Ato Tesfaye Mamo.





## HFE's Response to COVID-19



Every nation of our world today is fighting against the common global enemy, COVID-19. The pandemic is causing heavy damages on our lives, economy and interactions, and a coordinated effort to prevent the pandemic is of a paramount importance.

Immediately after the first confirmed case of COVID-19 in Ethiopia in March 2020, the Government of Ethiopia took several public health measures to prevent increased levels of infection. These included closing all schools and restricting large gatherings and movements of people. Hand-washing and social distancing were the main prevention measures that government has communicated to the general public through various media platforms.

Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia is playing a significant role to protect its staff and patients from the pandemic. It has also, with the support from GreenLamp and Australian Development Agency, distributed personal protective equipment (PPE) to Hamlin supported rural government clinics in Oromia, Amhara, Tigray and SNNPR.

"Hamlin is always committed to the safety of all, including its staff, patients and communities and taking every step possible to assist Hamlin supported government rural clinics during this difficult time, " said HFE's CEO, Ato Tesfaye Mamo, adding that Healthcare workers rely on personal protective equipment to protect themselves and their patients from being infected and infecting others.



HFE's Matron, Sr. Konjit Kassahun, also explained how the pandemic is affecting the flow of fistula

patients to HFE's hospitals. "The pandemic is definitely affecting the flow of fistula patients towards our hospitals. We usually expect a slowdown of patients flow during rainy seasons, but the fear of the pandemic has worsen the situation this time. We are assuring our patients and communities at large that we are taking all the necessary preventive measures against the pandemic, and our services are still available for our fistula patients."

## OUR HOSPITALIZATION

We have arranged a separate room in the main



hospital for new fistula patients and for those with follow up cases, where they stay for a few days under follow up. In case a patient shows coronavirus symptoms, an isolation room with two beds, drugs and oxygen supply is also made ready. There is also a plan to increase the capacity of the isolation room, expecting to manage more cases. Meanwhile, there are no corona cases yet reported in all our hospitals.

## OUR FISTULA PATIENTS

The safety of our patients has always been our top property. We teach our patients about the virus and the preventive measures. Face masks are regularly provided for all patients. Hand sanitizers are also made available in many accessible places in the hospital.

## OUR STAFF

At Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia, health and safety is a core value. In the face of the coronavirus pandemic, we have continued to live up to this core value, acting quickly and with great solidarity to protect our staff. We are continuously providing information on relevant procedures to prevent the spread of the virus. We are also promoting good hand hygiene by providing additional hand washing facilitates and alcohol-based hand sanitizers and appropriate waste receptacles. We are also regularly distributing all the necessary personal protective equipment to all our staff, and periodically disinfecting wards, offices and other facilities to prevent the spread of the virus.



## Retirement of the Unretired



“Today, we’ve all gathered here to honor and extend our gratitude to W/ro Mamitu and Gash Biru, two iconic Hamlin staff, who have given their entire life to the Hamlin’s dream and exceptionally contributed to the success of the organization,” said Ato Tesfaye Mamo, HFE’s CEO, during a farewell ceremony organized on July 16, 2020 at the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital.

“It’s very hard to think the lifelong astonishing work of Emayye without you both. Unlike anyone of us, you have been by the side of our founders during the long path of challenges and successes. Your iconic contribution will always be remembered throughout HFE’s history. Your retirement is just to give you some time to take a break from your long service. It doesn’t mean we are departing. We always need your advice and support,” added Ato Tesfaye Mamo.

During the ceremony, W/ro Mamitu and Gash

Biru received their retirement certificates and thank you gifts, and shared their astonishing life joinery and success with the attendees. They both asked staff to continue working towards the Hamlins’ vision and legacy.

Mamitu Gashe joined the Hamlins as a patient herself 61 years back at the Princes Tsehai Memorial Hospital. After fistula repair, she started working with the doctors as a nurse aid until she finally became an illiterate yet certified fistula surgeon. Following Dr. Catherine’s retirement, she became a full time assistance to Dr. Catherine.

Biru started his career with the Hamlins as a gardener at the Princess Tsehai Memorial Hospital also. Dr. Reg noticed his honest personality and made him a good Ethiopian friend. By the time the Hamlins were struggling to establish the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital, Biru also served

as a messenger, pharmacist, purchaser and translator, among others. Later on, following the loss of Dr. Reg, Biru stood by Dr. Catherine and provided her all the support until her final day.





## Our Students during COVID-19 Pandemic



Rahmet is a 3rd year student at the Hamlin College of Midwives. Following Ethiopian government's decision regarding preventive measures against COVID-19 pandemic, millions of students, including Rahmet, are staying at home since March, 2020.

Rahmet is with her family at her hometown Mettu, where one of the five Hamlin's outreach

centers is located. "We left the college being equipped with enough materials for all the courses, and we are thoroughly studying them. I am hoping that the pandemic will be under control and I will rejoin my college soon," Rahmet said on phone.

Like all higher institutions in the country, the Hamlin College of Midwives has sent off its 98 female midwifery students to their respective families in the countryside. Based on the direction of the government, the college is handling the teaching-learning process from distance. Students are categorized into advisory groups based on their academic year where instructors are assigned as advisors. Each group then creates Telegram group account so that members would have



access to teaching materials and exchange ideas among themselves. Each group has also its own group leader responsible for coordinating discussions.

Kibru, one of the instructors at the college, is now working from home. He said, "Despite some challenges, such as not having adequate technology and internet connectivity, the teaching-learning is smoothly going on. We are sharing materials with our students, and are having discussions via Telegram and on phone as well. The theoretical sections are so far so good."

The students are also recommended to visit their nearby government clinics for practical

observations. "Alongside my study, I regularly teach my neighbors on ways to prevent the pandemic and visit the government clinic in my community for practical observation," Rahmet said.

According to Ato Zelalem Belete, Dean of the Hamlin College of Midwives, the challenges of providing online education and support have not been simple either, but the college has partly succeeded so far is trying to stay in contact with the students using every possible option, and the strategy is hoped to make the transition to regular classes very smooth.





## Staff plant Trees in Memory of Emayye



Tree planting remains one of the events Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia staff are undertaking annually during the rainy season. This year, alongside protecting themselves from the corona pandemic, HFE staff from the Head Office, College and Rehabilitation and Reintegration Center arrived at Desta Mender in the morning of July 18, 2020 and planted hundreds of fruit trees inside the breathtaking bushy Hamlin's compound, located at the outskirts of Addis Abeba.

While officially opening the event, HFE's CEO, Ato Tesfaye Mamo, said, "It has been four months since we lost Emayye and most of us are still in grief. She used to be a life fruit for poor Ethiopian women in restoring their dignity with love and

affection so that they enjoy the sweet test of life again. Our tree planting today will be in memory of her. We will keep our eyes on the plants until we finally get the fruits as we keep our promise to continue her legacy until we realize her lifetime dream."

This year, the Ethiopian government has a plan to plant 5 billion trees across the country as part the Second Green Legacy Campaign. Hamlin's tree planting program is also part of the campaign.





### 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 question about Hamlin fistula Ethiopia, please contact us.

### Editor's note

The **Hamlin Newsletter** is published quarterly for the staff, partners, volunteers and visitor's of Hamlin fistula Ethiopia. Comments, suggestions and story ideas are welcome.



Hamlin fistula Ethiopia, communication department  
Phone:- +251113720083  
Fax:- +251113726253  
e-mail: [enquireies@hamlinfistula.org](mailto:enquireies@hamlinfistula.org)  
website: [www.hamlinfistula.org](http://www.hamlinfistula.org)  
P.O.Box:3609, Addis baba, Ethiopia