



# 2020 A Year In Review

Catherine Hamlin  
Fistula Foundation



## Thank you for your continued compassion

As 2020 draws to a close, we reflect on an extraordinary year which saw the very sad passing of Dr Catherine Hamlin and the terrible impact of a global pandemic. We thank you for your continued compassion, love and trust in us.

Mother Teresa once said: “Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love.” It is a notion that epitomized Catherine’s work. To her, every woman mattered. It is an ethos that remains at the heart of Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia; throughout 2020, it drove every fistula repair surgery and baby born safely at a Hamlin hospital or clinic.

Catherine planned for her hospitals to continue long after she was gone and the team at Hamlin have not wavered. This year saw a renewed determination by our extraordinary medical professionals - many of whom trained under Catherine - to continue her work.

Their results are highlighted in this newsletter. We are so proud of this significant progress in a very difficult year. We are also proud of you, our wonderful supporters for helping take us a step closer to fulfilling Catherine’s goal to eradicate fistula from Ethiopia and in doing so, go some way towards eradicating it from our world altogether. A special thank you must go to our committed community of Hamlin regular givers.

We know this year has been challenging for all of us. Thank you for continuing to support Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia. We couldn’t do it without you.

**We wish you a safe and happy Christmas.**

**Carolyn Hardy,**  
CEO, Catherine Hamlin Fistula Foundation

### Treatment FY20

**450**

prolapse surgeries

**1,021**

fistula and  
fistula-related surgeries

### Rehabilitation FY20

**437**

patients completed  
counseling  
programs

**607**

patients enrolled  
in training and  
education courses

### Prevention FY20

**90**

students undertaking their  
BSc Degree in Midwifery

**195**

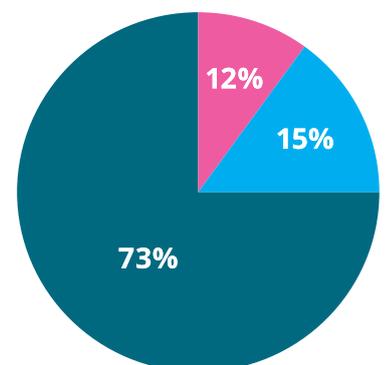
midwifery  
graduates to  
date

### How your donations were spent in FY20

Obstetric Fistula  
Treatment & Prevention

CHFF Fundraising

CHFF Administration



# Treatment

Obstetric fistula is a complex injury that requires special treatment and care. The physical and psychological consequences are both debilitating and heartbreaking. Yet, most fistula injuries can be repaired with a simple 60-minute operation which completely restores a woman's life and dignity.

In FY2020, over 1,000 fistula surgeries were performed at Hamlin's six fistula hospitals. Hamlin is working harder than ever to find and treat women in remote parts of Ethiopia who

have suffered alone for years, perhaps decades, without knowing that help is available. Hundreds of Hamlin-trained local health workers go door to door, person to person, tirelessly searching for the estimated 31,000 women still physically and emotionally isolated by fistula. They are brought to the nearest Hamlin hospital for treatment.

"You gave me my life back, for which I am forever indebted. I can't thank you enough for what you did for me and for many women like me." - *Buritu*

**"My dream is to eradicate obstetric fistula from Ethiopia. I won't do this in my lifetime, but you can in yours."**

*Dr Catherine Hamlin*

1,021

fistula and fistula-related surgeries in FY20

450

prolapse surgeries in FY20



## Still operating during COVID-19

The pandemic led to a dramatic reduction in patients seeking treatment at Hamlin's fistula hospitals from May - August as people became increasingly fearful of travelling. However, Hamlin's Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital and 80 Hamlin-supported rural midwifery clinics remained open, with safeguards in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19. October saw a return to normal operations at all six Hamlin hospitals.



# Rehabilitation

Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia's Rehabilitation and Reintegration centre, Desta Mender, embodies the Hamlin Model of Care, which is grounded in a fundamental respect for women with fistula injuries and a strong commitment to provide complete and compassionate care.

Hamlin's team at Desta Mender continues to restore the health and dignity of women who have sustained severe or complex fistula injuries.

During their stay, they receive physical and emotional rehabilitation while accessing ongoing medical care for their injuries. Women also receive a basic education, life skills and vocational training, empowering them to be productive members of their communities when they return home.



607

patients enrolled in training and education courses in FY20

437

patients completed counseling programs in FY20



At Hamlin's Desta Mender, Yeschi received something she thought she would never have - an education. Now, she is no longer illiterate and through education courses she learnt bookkeeping and cashier skills. Yeschi went on to set up her own coffee shop, called 'Courage'.

Yeschi's regular income enables her to pay for her younger sister and brother to attend high school.

The education provided at Desta Mender enables women to live with dignity and independence. To date, Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia has helped around 50 past fistula patients start their own business.

**“To send women home to experience a normal life, after all they have suffered, is the greatest reward we can have.”**

*Dr Catherine Hamlin*

## (Em)powering through the pandemic

Most of the patients at Desta Mender returned home in March and long-term patients were relocated to Hamlin's Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital for ongoing treatment and care. When restrictions lifted in July, a small number of women re-started rehabilitation and this number will continue to increase throughout the remainder of this year.



# Prevention

Hamlin Midwives continue to prevent obstetric fistula and hundreds of maternal and neonatal deaths. They also support, nurture and empower women while sharing invaluable knowledge and building trusting networks, transforming entire communities in rural Ethiopia.

24,856

babies delivered by Hamlin Midwives in FY20

37,232

pregnant women seen for their first antenatal check in FY20



**“My dream is for a midwife in every village of Ethiopia.”**

*Dr Catherine Hamlin*

There are now 80 Hamlin-supported midwifery clinics across rural Ethiopia. This year, our midwives have also been on the frontline in the fight against COVID-19, helping to prevent infection in the communities they work in.



**The Hamlin College of Midwives continues to be a centre of excellence for the training of midwives:**

25

Hamlin midwifery graduates in the class of 2020

90

students undertaking their BSc Degree in Midwifery

195

Hamlin Midwives have graduated since 2010 and been deployed to rural areas

## Studying Midwifery during a pandemic

The temporary closure of the Hamlin College of Midwives in March sent students back home to study remotely from rural communities across Ethiopia. Each cohort had a designated advisor supporting them via phone, as well as via email and online learning groups where possible. Students also visited nearby government clinics for practical observations. Despite these challenges, the class of 2020 all graduated with a BSc in Midwifery! The College re-opened in September in time for the new academic year.



# Thank you message from our Board of Directors

As we reflect on the year 2020, it is with both great sadness and great hope. Sadly, Dr Catherine Hamlin passed away on the 18th March after a life well lived. Drs Catherine and Reg Hamlin devoted their lives to the women of Ethiopia and their work healing and saving the lives of women with horrific birth injuries will continue until fistula is eradicated throughout Ethiopia. The Hamlin Model of Care lives on through the hospitals and the Hamlin trained midwives working across the country. The love and care that first began over 60 years ago by the Hamlins is now in the safe and caring hands of our Ethiopian doctors and nurses, as envisaged by Catherine and Reg when they first set up the hospital in Addis Ababa.

The world has suffered this year with the devastation of COVID-19. This unprecedented pandemic has taken a heavy toll upon our communities. But we are so proud of and so grateful to our many donors who have continued to support the work in Ethiopia so that treatment can continue apace. The staff at Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia have been so brave and stoic through this difficult period of world history and their priority always has been to help and support the many women who have presented at the hospitals and clinics with fistula through this time.

A real focus for 2021 and beyond is the Patient Identification Program which will help us reach the goal of eradicating fistula from Ethiopia by 2030. We are seeking out every remaining patient, many in isolated rural communities and many who have lived with fistula for many years, so that they too can return to a normal happy healthy life. Your valuable support will enable these vulnerable women to be found and treated and we sincerely thank you for this support.

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Catherine Hamlin Fistula Foundation, I wish you and your loved ones a very Merry Christmas and a safe, healthy and happy 2021. We have high expectations that 2021 will be a year of great achievement - the women of Ethiopia need us to continue our work and to tackle fistula with all the resources that we have available. Your continued participation and support is vital to this work.

**Julie White, Chair, and the Board of Directors at Catherine Hamlin Fistula Foundation**



**Catherine Hamlin Fistula Foundation**

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**Catherine Hamlin  
Fistula Foundation** 