



## A Positive Start To 2022

We've had a positive start to 2022 with 219 women having surgery at Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia's hospitals in January alone. The start of a new chapter and a chance to rebuild.

Restoring self-belief and harnessing inner strength is key to rehabilitation. At Desta Mender, our Rehabilitation and Reintegration Center, the positivity continues as we see more and more women leaving with confidence restored, ready to thrive in their new lives. You can read more about this important work later in this newsletter.

In early March we reflected on International Women's Day, which this year recognizes the theme 'Break The Bias'; something that happens every time a former fistula patient is able to return to her community. This also reaffirms what we all know, that 'Every Woman Matters.'

With Mother's Day coming up there is the chance to remind the special woman in your life that she matters too.

Why not treat her to a copy of *Healing Lives* by Sue Williams, the heartwarming story of Hamlin surgeon Mamitu Gashe who had a nearly 60-year friendship with Dr Catherine Hamlin. Grab your copy [here](#).

Thank you to each and every one of you for supporting Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia and for ensuring women facing debilitating fistula injuries receive treatment and compassion.

I look forward to seeing what 2022 brings and what we achieve together.





## Your Support in Action

### Mulu's joy at being cured after 17 years!

**“Look at me now, I am the happiest woman in the world!  
I walk around with confidence and dignity.  
Now I can work and change my life.”**  
- Mulu

Obstetric fistula stole Mulu's joy, confidence and relationships for 17 years.

Today, because of you, Mulu is regaining her health, happiness and sense of self, after receiving surgery at Hamlin's Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital.

Mulu was born and raised in Benishangul-Gumuz, a north-western region of Ethiopia. She grew up in a small village and, after discovering she was pregnant, was looking forward to welcoming her newborn baby.

But after two agonizing days of obstructed labor, Mulu was taken to the nearest hospital for emergency care. Her beautiful baby was stillborn, and she was left incontinent.

Due to the complexity of her injuries, Mulu underwent multiple surgeries over the years.

Finally, in March last year, Mulu returned to Hamlin's Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital to receive a specialist diversion surgery and her injuries were healed.

**“I am completely dry after 17 years! I cannot thank all the staff and those who support their work enough.”**- Mulu

Dr Catherine Hamlin believed that every woman matters. Mulu's treatment over 17 years at Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia embodies that ethos and the Hamlin Model of Care remains the cornerstone for every patient's treatment.

Thanks to your support, women like Mulu are empowered to rebuild their lives. If you haven't already, you can make a donation at [catherinehamlin.org/donate/](https://catherinehamlin.org/donate/)

**“This hospital and the lovely medical team are the only untiring supporters who helped me stay alive until today.”** - Mulu

## Hamlin Model of Care

The Hamlin Model of Care is grounded in a fundamental respect for the patient and a strong commitment to provide complete and compassionate care.



**Patient identification**



**Surgical repair**



**Clothing & a Hamlin blanket**



**Nutrition**



**Physiotherapy**



**Counseling**



**Vocational training**



**Reintegration support**



**Women's Empowerment Program**



## Rehabilitation

Whilst surgery might heal the physical wounds of fistula, many women need support to rebuild their confidence.

Between July to December 2021, the mental health of 176 women had improved, after receiving support at Desta Mender, Hamlin's Rehabilitation and Reintegration Center.

556 women completed numeracy and literacy training modules and 175 women had an improved ability to work.

This is why rehabilitation continues to be a core part of the Hamlin Model of Care, empowering women to live with independence and dignity.

## Preoperative rehabilitation

Whilst many women need rehabilitation after surgery, many others like Sartu (right), need it to prepare for their operations.

Sartu spent nearly a day in labor which caused an obstetric fistula. Tragically she lost her baby.



Sartu received four weeks of rehabilitation at Hamlin's Harar Fistula Hospital before undergoing surgery, which cured her of her fistula injuries.

**“For me this is like a miracle. Within just four months I regained my dignity and pulled out of the agony and depression that I was in. I can start dreaming of the future.”** - Sartu

**“Many women are experiencing depression as a result of their condition. As part of the Hamlin Model of Care, we encourage them to stay strong.”**

- Dr Betty

Dr Betty is the first responder as women arrive at Hamlin's Addis Ababa Hospital, managing frontline patient assessments. For many women, this consultation with Dr Betty marks the start of a new chapter in their lives.

When a patient arrives having recently suffered a fistula, Dr Betty provides counselling, ongoing care and support.

Many women with fistula avoid drinking water to lessen their incontinence, so Dr Betty helps them to understand the importance of drinking to keep hydrated.



Dr Betty, right, with nursing aides at Hamlin's Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital.

Dr Betty also runs a general Outpatients Clinic once a week, assisting women who need longer-term support and rehabilitation.

# Thanks for Supporting Ethiopian Women

Thanks to all of you who donated to our Giving Tuesday and End of Year appeals, which took place at the end of 2021.

We asked for your help to transform the lives of five women through surgery for fistula injuries, and you stepped up! Through these two campaigns, we raised US\$18,625 which can give 34 women life-restoring surgery.

**Because of you, women like Almaz who faced years struggling with debilitating injuries, are now cured and dry.**

**“My being cured is still a surprise. Thank you for making this happen and for letting me be a woman again.” - Almaz**



# Two Surgeons from Afghanistan and Nepal Train under Hamlin Model of Care

As we lead the fight to eradicate fistula around the world, we welcome Dr Atia Sharif Nadi from Afghanistan and Dr Shuvechchha Dewa Shresrha from Nepal. They will spend six weeks training at Hamlin’s Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital.

Both doctors will then go back to their home countries to deliver and train others in best-practice surgical techniques to repair fistula injuries.

**“The hospital is a beautiful and peaceful place that creates joy among patients. The lovely and friendly staff puts this place at the top of my over 30 years’ experience in the area.”**

*- Dr Atia Sharif Nadi*

This training takes place as part of Hamlin’s partnership with the International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO) and the FIGO Fistula Surgery Training Initiative.

**“This is the best fistula center I have known or heard of by far... I feel like I am in the perfect place to learn more. I wish I could stay longer.”**

*- Dr Shuvechchha Dewa Shresrha*



# Walk for Ethiopian Mothers

Did you know that you can support Ethiopian women with obstetric fistula just by walking?

Every year, thousands of Ethiopian women walk, or are carried, huge distances to access basic health care. Women like Semenesh, who endured a painful, obstructed labor for three days, resulting in her baby being stillborn and Semenesh being left incontinent.



Semenesh lived in pain and isolation for three years until she bravely walked over 22mi (35kms) across mountainous terrain to find emergency obstetric care and Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia, where she received critical surgery and holistic care.

You can stand in solidarity with women like Semenesh. [Start your own fundraiser](#) to walk 22mi, or another distance of your choice.



You could even grab your friends, family or colleagues and make it a group fundraiser. Visit <https://bit.ly/3uo5ecW> to learn more or to sign up to Walk for Ethiopian Mothers.

All funds raised go to the Catherine Hamlin Fistula Foundation, ensuring more women like Semenesh get the care they need and that future generations of Ethiopian women never have to experience this suffering.

**“One day I woke up and I started a desperate journey seeking help from someone, somewhere.” - Semenesh**

## Gifts From The Heart

When you buy a Gift From The Heart, a gift card will be emailed to you or someone you love. Each gift represents one way you can help restore the lives of Ethiopian women suffering from fistula injuries. Order with [this link](#). Gifts From The Heart are sold from our Australian site. Your ecard or pdf will be emailed to you instantly.



The Gift of Hope - AUD20

Support the treatment and prevention of obstetric fistula.



The Gift of Physio - AUD60

Fund preoperative physiotherapy for one patient.



The Gift of a Support Pack - AUD150.

Provide a support pack to empower a long-term patient returning home.



The Gift of a Fistula Operation - AUD700

Contribute to a fistula repair surgery in a Hamlin regional hospital.

### Catherine Hamlin Fistula Foundation

E [hq@catherinehamlin.org](mailto:hq@catherinehamlin.org) W [catherinehamlin.org](http://catherinehamlin.org) ACN 58 159 647 499 • 2022AN

Photos by Aschelew Taddese, Mary F. Calvert, Martha Tadesse, Amber Hooper, Joni Kabana and Kate Geraghty (The Sydney Morning Herald)

Catherine Hamlin Fistula Foundation Friends Fund

KBF USA

10 Rockefeller Plaza, 16th Floor,  
New York NY 10020.

United States

Catherine Hamlin Fistula Foundation (Project D304  
Fistula Ethiopia Hamlin)

KBF Foundation Canada

1 Place Ville Marie, Suite 1670

Montreal QC H3B 2B6

Canada