



2022  
September

## Life-changing work: An update from Ethiopia

I have just returned from an inspirational trip to Ethiopia with Chair, Julie White. It was wonderful to be back and spend time with our dedicated colleagues and friends at Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia. **As I write this and reflect on my visit, I feel so grateful to people like you, our supporters, who make this life-changing work happen.**



Our first stop was the graduation of students who completed their Bachelor of Science degree in Midwifery at the Hamlin College of Midwives this year. These intelligent and compassionate young women will now be deployed to rural areas to work in Hamlin-supported midwifery clinics. They will go on to save the lives of mothers and babies and drastically reduce cases of obstetric fistula.

We also spent time with Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia surgeons, including Mamitu Gashe, one of our longest serving, Dr Zahra from Metu, Dr Lete from Harar and Dr Yeshina, Clinical Director in Addis. The team all spoke with passion and commitment. Despite the challenges of the last few years they are more determined than ever and ambitious targets are in place to move towards the eradication of childbirth injuries in Ethiopia. I am proud to work alongside them.

But it was the patients that reminded me of why this work, and your support is so vital. It was incredible to see the joy they experienced post surgery when they were finally treated for their devastating injuries and the trust they had in the Hamlin clinical team. Just one operation can completely change a woman's life and give her back her freedom.

**On behalf of our patients, thank you for making this happen.**

There are more positive updates in this newsletter as we celebrate 20 years of Desta Mender, Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia's Rehabilitation and Reintegration Centre.

I hope you enjoy reading about your impact. We couldn't do any of this without you.

**Carolyn Hardy**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Catherine Hamlin Fistula Foundation



## 20 years of Desta Mender

### Your support in action

This year marks 20 years since Catherine established Desta Mender, Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia's Rehabilitation and Reintegration Centre, where thousands of survivors of obstetric fistula have received free physiotherapy, counselling, long-term medical care and vocational training.

**These 20 years of compassionate care were only made possible by funding from generous donors and supporters like you. Thank you.**

As we look to the next 20 years, we are proud to know more women will be empowered to live with choice and autonomy, through exciting projects such as Hamlin's Women's Empowerment Program. Here, women who would otherwise struggle to make an income will receive three months of training in leadership and small-business. Watch the video by clicking the icon on the right to learn more about this inspiring program.



*click here to  
watch the video*

**“I stayed with fistula for ten years.”**

- Mulu Girma\*, Hamlin Women's Empowerment Program Trainee.



“We are not able to stand and talk with people. We don't go to church like normal people. We don't go to the marketplace. I used to live in much suffering.”

“When we were invited for this training, I am so happy. I want to open a small inn in my village and sell food” says Mulu.

The Women's Empowerment Program was established in 2021 to create a complete healing and empowerment process for women with child-birth injuries.

So far, 425 women have benefited from the program and by the end of 2022 we are expecting another 240 women to have completed the program.

The Women's Empowerment Program will continue to expand and enrol many more women in the years to come, ensuring they are able to live with choice, independence and confidence.



## Healing and hope for future generations

Dr Catherine Hamlin’s vision was to eradicate obstetric fistula in Ethiopia. She devoted her life to women living with obstetric fistula, giving them love, hope and the opportunity to regain their lives.

**It is now up to us to finish what she started - to ensure future generations of Ethiopian women live free from fistula.** Leaving a gift in your Will (also known as a legacy) makes the well-being of Ethiopia’s most vulnerable women part of your life’s story.

### Why Maree has left a gift in her Will

Maree has been supporting Hamlin for many years. As a Mum, with a daughter living in a country where obstetric fistula is almost unheard of, Maree thinks it’s a ‘no brainer’ that a gift in her Will can make such a monumental difference to women’s lives through surgery and education of future midwives.



Above: Maree

**“Women and girls deserve to be protected from obstetric fistula injuries. Thank you for considering leaving a gift in your Will.”**

- Dr Catherine Hamlin

“The thought of any woman experiencing this devastating injury and the life lead because of it, is simply horrifying. If my simple gift contributes to a better life for her and, by extension, her community, I’m thrilled to be a small part,” says Maree.

**Your legacy gift can make a huge impact on Ethiopian women’s lives for generations to come.**



**\$45,000** could fund life-changing surgery for **50 women**



**\$34,000** could provide counselling, health education training and literacy and numeracy classes to **100 recovering fistula patients**



**\$77,600** could fund scholarships for **4 students** at the Hamlin College of Midwives.

For more information about leaving a legacy gift in your Will, visit <https://catherinehamlin.org/planned-giving/>

## A NEW way to celebrate your loved one’s life

Etch a memory is a beautiful new way you can celebrate the life of your loved one. Why not etch the name of someone you love and miss on one of three new In Loving Memory monuments that are being erected at Hamlin’s Addis Ababa fistula hospital, the Hamlin College of Midwives and Desta Mender\*.

\*a minimum donation amount applies

To find out more, email us on [hq@catherinehamlin.org](mailto:hq@catherinehamlin.org)





## From fistula patient to proud businesswoman

Leyat\* and her husband Amarech\* spent all their money searching for a cure for Leyat's obstetric fistula injuries.

Their desperate hunt came to an end when they found Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia's Bahir Dar Hospital where Leyat was treated free of charge. Due to the complexity of her injury she went on to receive further free surgery at Hamlin's Addis Ababa Hospital.

She had finally found help, but by then her family had lost everything.

Because of you, Leyat could access vocational training at Desta Mender, Hamlin's Rehabilitation and Reintegration Center. Leyat completed agriculture training and received some seed money to set up her own small farming business.

"After I passed through this training my life changed" says Leyat.

"The seed money I received has now grown to big capital and the education has equipped me with confidence."

**"I had nothing to eat or wear. We used to live by luck"**  
- Leyat



Leyat's husband Amarech is proud of his wife. "Because of that devastating problem my wife had been restricted to home, unable to support herself let alone the family. Now after you treated her however she visit markets with friends, goes to church, eats and drinks whatever she wants."



"Currently we have enough food to feed our family for over a year, we have a new house, two cows and planted cash crops on our farm. The seed money is the start of all of these" says Amarech

You brought happiness and security back to our home and I can't thank you enough for your generosity."

Thank you for your support.





## Hamlin College of Midwives Class of 2022

At the end of July, we celebrated the graduation of 16 impressive young women from the Hamlin College of Midwives. Each had studied a four-year Bachelor of Science degree in Midwifery and will now spend at least another four years working in Hamlin-supported Midwifery Clinics, preventing obstetric fistula and saving lives.



### Beza Gebremichael - Top of the class

“Midwives are important. During my clinical practice there was a mother who was bleeding severely. She was so pale and unconscious but after management she survived. I was very happy to see that.

After graduating, I am excited that I will be posted to my family’s community in SNNPR in Southwestern Ethiopia. It gives me satisfaction because serving them feels like paying them back for what they did for me.”



### Mastewal Andualem - Second in the class

“Midwives; they save the life of both the mother and the baby. Now I am graduating, I am happy because I too will save lives.

I’ll be working in the Amhara region where my family is from. I understand the language, culture, and beliefs of the community. Therefore, I can solve their problems accordingly. I am excited to begin my career as a midwife there.”



### Mulu Kassaw - Third in the class

“I decided I wanted to become a midwife before I was seven years old. My Aunt was a graduate by this profession.

“The parts of this job I will enjoy the most are attending delivery and giving family planning service. I am being posted to a Hamlin-supported midwifery clinic in the Amhara region, close to my family. I am happy that I will be of service to the women in my community.”



### Etsegenet Wudneh - managed 108 deliveries!

(Australian BSc Midwifery graduates have managed a minimum of 30 ‘normal births’ by the time they graduate)

“I’m very happy I have graduated because now I can help rural area mothers. I will be working in a Hamlin midwifery clinic in SNNPR near to my family home and community.

The midwifery profession is a gift of God. Not all people can be a midwife. If you are gifted, be a midwife and be empathetic.”

# Healing Lives Book Review

by Sarah Hamlin,  
granddaughter of Dr  
Catherine Hamlin

This is the story of a remarkable friendship between two extraordinary women.

Born twenty-two years apart in the first half of the 20th century, Mamitu Gashe and Dr Catherine Hamlin first met as patient and doctor at the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital and, with a mutual admiration and respect that deepened over time, became colleagues and close friends who held each other in the protective love of a mother and daughter.

Drawing on extensive research, author Sue Williams has skilfully shaped a narrative that covers almost 100 years.

During that time, Ethiopian society has been transformed by political revolution, medical and technological advancement, and economic growth. Mamitu and Catherine's stories are placed firmly within the context of this challenging period, during which they were building a world-leading model of care for women whom many seemed to have forgotten.



Williams' rich descriptions of my grandparents' work and characters are particularly insightful and true-to-life; reading about Catherine and Reginald's early years together, it feels as though we are really there, a fly-on-the-wall in some of their most private moments.

And, for the first time, Mamitu's story is placed front and center as Williams shines a spotlight on her experiences and the incredible achievements that have shaped her



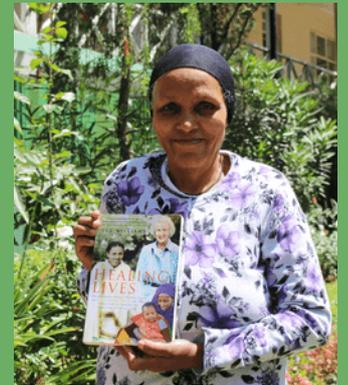
internationally-significant role as both a surgeon and teacher. Most movingly, we witness Mamitu's courage, humility and life-long devotion to the women who have suffered like her. Healing Lives reveals again how deserving she is of her worldwide renown.

Williams' book also offers us hope for the future. The early work of Catherine, Reginald, Mamitu and others at the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital has paved the way for a global effort to restore life and dignity to the women who continue to suffer these devastating childbirth injuries.

With this ongoing support, we can now anticipate that these preventable conditions will one day be eradicated forever.

Get a copy on  
Amazon!

Purchase your copy of Healing Lives on Amazon or by clicking here.



## Catherine Hamlin Fistula Foundation

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