

Catherine Hamlin
Fistula Foundation



July 2024 Newsletter

I'm thrilled to let you know what your support has achieved during the past year.

I know times are difficult for many people right now. But as always, you, our incredible supporters have risen to the occasion and generously supported our Tax Appeal, giving more women the opportunity to reclaim their lives after suffering the trauma of fistula for far too long.

I've just returned from visiting my colleagues at Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia, whose dedication and compassion continue to inspire us all to raise awareness and funding for this wonderful cause. I chatted with some of our brave patients, whose stories of heartache and joy at finally being free from fistula are always so humbling.

I encourage you to visit Ethiopia with us in either November 2024 or March 2025. You'll have an insider's tour of Hamlin's Addis Ababa and Yirgalem Fistula Hospitals, two rural Hamlin-supported midwifery clinics, the Hamlin College of Midwives and our rehabilitation and reintegration centre at Desta Mender - plus some sightseeing in the south of this extraordinary country. It's an opportunity not to be missed.

Our Mekele Fistula Hospital in the Tigray region is now back to full operational capacity. Our surgeons are working doubly hard to restore the health and dignity of so many more patients who had been prevented from seeking help during the conflict.

The ability to meet this increased need is only possible thanks to your overwhelming support. Your generosity helped repair damaged wards and operating theatres, provided medical equipment for a second operating theatre and helped restock many other urgently needed apparatus and supplies.

Following the incredibly successful pilot, the next phase of Project Zero began in Didessa Woreda in the Oromia region of Ethiopia on 13 February 2024. Halfway through this woreda, the Project Zero team has already found 81 women with childbirth injuries who have now been treated and are starting their lives anew.

As our beloved founder, Dr Catherine Hamlin once said, "To send women home to experience again a normal life after all they have suffered is the greatest reward we can have, and is shared by all who look after fistula patients."



My heartfelt thanks to you all for your unwavering commitment to the women of Ethiopia.

Julie White, Executive Chair
Catherine Hamlin Fistula Foundation



Finding, healing and empowering women

Alex tells us what inspires her to be a Hamlin Regular Giver

I've been married to Michael for 21 years and where we live, we are very involved in our local community.

We overcame infertility challenges to have our two lovely daughters, Charlotte (16) and Georgia (10). Both births were extremely challenging. I'm convinced our happy and healthy outcome wouldn't have been achieved without the expertise of an outstanding medical team and innovative facilities we are lucky to have.

This cause really resonates with me and I'm inspired by the Hamlins' vision to eradicate obstetric fistula forever.

I was moved to tears when I watched Oprah Winfrey's interview with Dr Catherine Hamlin in 2004. I couldn't believe so many women were suffering with such a devastating, yet preventable childbirth injury. It broke my heart to hear they often lost their baby, too and were ostracized by their families.

I was inspired to become a Hamlin Monthly Giver after learning that the Hamlin fistula hospitals treat women free of charge, restoring their dignity and hope for the future. I was truly amazed that a simple operation could change the lives of these women and their communities, bringing healing, restoring joy and empowering women.

I've just returned from the March Hamlin Ethiopian



Adventure and saw first-hand how my monthly donations are being used at the Hamlin hospitals and clinics.

I had the honor of meeting the brave patients and inspiring medical teams. They are so appreciative of the support. The fistula operations really do change lives.

I'm glad I can make a small difference to relieving the suffering of women in Ethiopia. I want them to know that we aren't oblivious to their plight and we support them from afar. I want my girls to realise how fortunate they are to live where we do and discover their own passions to make a difference to the lives of disadvantaged women and children.

Thank you to all our generous Hamlin Monthly Givers

You, our amazing community of Hamlin Monthly Givers, are helping find, heal and empower women every day.

We couldn't do it without you!



Do you want to make a greater impact?

Join our amazing Monthly Giving community today. It's the most effective way to support women with fistula injuries and make an enduring difference to their lives.

Visit catherinehamlin.org/monthly-giving

A baby girl for Enku after fistula

“They [Hamlin hospital staff] took my happiness as their happiness. When I gave birth to my child, all of them were very happy.” - Enku

Enku sustained a complex obstetric fistula injury during the birth of her fourth child. After an excruciating four-day labor, her family carried her on a traditional, handmade stretcher to the nearest health center, where her stillborn baby was delivered.

Due to the severity of Enku’s injuries, she was referred to the local hospital where staff told her about Hamlin’s Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital. She told us:

“The people who work here take care of me very well. I could not move my hands and could not stand by myself. I smelled bad. But the people here accept me with all my deformities.”

With the help of “these good people”, Enku received physiotherapy to regain her movement before receiving life-changing fistula surgery eight months later.



She made a full recovery and returned home to her family.

Enku was overjoyed when she became pregnant again. She returned to Hamlin’s Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital for the caesarean delivery of her daughter, free of charge thanks to supporters like you.

“I am very lucky to have conceived this baby after all the unforgettable and painful injuries. I thank all the hospital staff for accepting me back happily. I gave birth to a girl and they gave me nutritional food to make me and my child healthy. They take care of me, just like a mother and a father. I am very happy now.”

Last spots left! Join us in Ethiopia

6-18
November
2024



“The reality of seeing the women, the colourful patchwork blankets, the welcoming staff, brings a big lump to your throat and the tears just flow. It’s real.” - March 2024 Adventurer

With only a couple of spots left on our November Hamlin Ethiopian Adventure, don’t miss this incredible opportunity to see your support in action.

Book now at <https://catherinehamlin.org/hamlin-ethiopian-adventure>.

Why you’ll love this trip

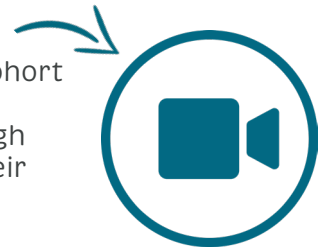
- ♥ Insider’s tour of Hamlin’s Addis Ababa and Yirgalem Fistula Hospitals plus two rural Hamlin-supported midwifery clinics
- ♥ Meet brave and beautiful obstetric fistula patients
- ♥ Observe diverse and vibrant Ethiopian cultures including the Ari, Mursi, Konso and Karo tribes
- ♥ Witness Ethiopia’s incredible natural landscapes, diverse wildlife and rich cultural heritage
- ♥ Experience the warmth and hospitality of the Ethiopian people...and so much more!

Congratulations!

14th cohort of Women's Empowerment Program graduates



Must watch! Take a look at this short video to see the latest cohort of the Women's Empowerment Program dance and sing through their graduation ceremony. Their happiness is so infectious!



Your support of this program is giving former fistula patients the opportunity to learn vital life skills, returning to their communities with hope, choices and independence.

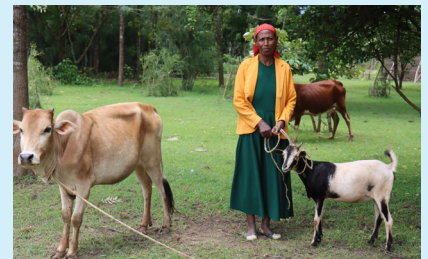
Adanech: A role model in her community

Adanech sustained a devastating obstetric fistula during the birth of her seventh child, which left her incontinent and in immense physical and emotional pain. She withdrew from her family and community.

Following transformative fistula surgery at both Hamlin's Yirgalem and Addis Ababa Fistula Hospitals, Adanech was eager to rebuild her life. During the Women's Empowerment Program

at Desta Mender, Adanech trained in handicrafts, food preparation and poultry farming, but her passion was agriculture and animal husbandry.

Adanech started her own business with the seed money she was given. She invested in a cow and a goat and saved her earnings. She encouraged other women to do the same and they pooled their resources to strive for a brighter future, together.



“They [Hamlin staff] helped me triumph over pain and isolation to stand tall as a beacon of hope and resilience”

– Adanech

Your support in action

Your support has given Hawwa the opportunity to start her life anew after the trauma of fistula.

When complications in her first pregnancy left her with a horrific fistula injury and leaking urine, Hawwa hid away in pain, shame and isolation for years.

Hamlin's Patient Identification team found Hawwa despite the fact she was hidden away. They brought her to Hamlin's Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital for life-changing surgery and wrapped her in warmth, encouragement and new hope.

Thanks to your support, Hawwa is finally free from the anguish of fistula.

Right now, too many women like Hawwa are trapped in the agony and isolation of fistula, unaware that a simple surgery could cure them.

With your continued support, we are going door to door until every woman is found and given the treatment they desperately need to restore their health and dignity. If you haven't made a donation to help women like Hawwa, you can do so now at catherinehamlin.org/donate



“Now I feel healthy! I am dry. I will go home and start my life again.”

– Hawwa

Project Zero: Finding women hidden away with obstetric fistula



Fasika suffered with fistula for 18 years before being found by the Project Zero team in Didessa Woreda.

The next phase of Project Zero, Hamlin's ground-breaking program to accelerate the eradication of obstetric fistula, started in Didessa Woreda in the Oromia region of Ethiopia on 13 February 2024. This woreda (district) covers an area of 632 square kms, with an estimated number of 18,208 rural households.

An initial baseline assessment was conducted to determine levels of awareness of fistula and use of maternal healthcare services. Both were rated very low, meaning there is significant work to be done by the Project Zero team in this woreda.

At the start of March, the Health Development Army (HDA) together with health extension workers started house-to-house surveys to find women hidden with untreated obstetric fistula injuries.

The team are halfway through work in this woreda, and 81 women have been found, treated and transferred to Hamlin's Metu Fistula Hospital for treatment and are now able to start their lives anew. Project Zero will be rolled out to Fedis Woreda and Serahiti Woreda in the second half of 2024, with more pilots with more woredas planned for 2025 planned for 2025.

Thank You!

Thank you, our wonderful supporters, for your unwavering support of women suffering the trauma of obstetric fistula. YOU make our work possible.

Together, we will achieve Catherine's vision of eradicating obstetric fistula. Forever.



Catherine Hamlin Fistula Foundation

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Photos by Cameron Bloom, Joe Filshie and Joni Kabana. * Patient names have been changed to protect the identities of those we help.

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