

Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital



Newsletter | December 2008



A great Christmas Gift

The 2009 Golden Jubilee Calendar provides a lasting celebration of Dr Catherine Hamlin's 50 years in Ethiopia. It has many beautiful images of life at the Hospital and traces the Hamlins' amazing story.

Price \$20 (incl postage and GST)

See the inside detachable donation slip for how to purchase the Calendar and other Christmas ideas.

DR ANDREW BROWNING

Dr Andrew Browning, his wife Stephanie and their young son William recently returned to Australia for several months. Whilst in Australia, Andrew will undertake further training in reconstructive surgery.

Andrew spoke at the recent annual public meeting of the Fund where he told the story of Abebush.

Several weeks ago, just before Stephanie, William and I returned to Australia, Abebush arrived at the Fistula Centre in Bahir Dar. Abebush was married for 2 years when she became pregnant. She went into labour in her village and delivered a stillborn child after 5 days of labour. When she regained consciousness she found she was leaking urine and faeces from fistulae both to her rectum and

bladder. Her husband divorced her and she went to live with her widowed mother who was very poor. Abebush's mother looked after her as best she could.

For the last 6 years, Abebush was kept in a little hut. She was fed once a day. All that time she lay curled up on the floor and after some time her legs became locked in contractures in the foetal position. She is unable to straighten her hips or knees or flex her ankles.

She was found by a partner Non Government Organisation which brought her to us in Bahir Dar. She was in a pitiful state. She was completely emaciated weighing barely 30kgs. She cried in pain every time she moved as her bones rubbed on the bed. She was very depressed. The first time she smiled after arriving at the centre was when William came to cheer her up. William calls her the 'tired lady'.

Abeebush is only about 20 years old and has spent almost a third of her life locked away in a little room.

She has now been moved to our main hospital in Addis Ababa where she will receive much love, care and treatment to prepare her for the fistula surgery which hopefully will cure her and give her a new life.



Abeebush – the tired lady

DR CATHERINE HAMLIN'S MESSAGE TO THE ANNUAL PUBLIC MEETING OF THE FUND RECENTLY HELD IN SYDNEY

My Dear Friends in Australia

Since the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital was first opened 34 years ago, it has treated and cured thousands of destitute women. Many of them are still in their teenage years. Their lives have been ruined by the devastating effects of obstetric fistulae. It gives all of us who help these poor women a great sense of joy and satisfaction to see so many with their lives and dignity restored.



Ethiopia has a population of nearly 80 million people with 65 million people living in rural villages. There are only about 1,100 trained midwives in the whole country and nearly all of them work in the main cities and towns. So there is no proper medical help for the thousands of village women who each year experience obstructed labour. For these women there is no hope. Many of them die. A “lucky” few survive the ordeal. But they only live to suffer a worse horror - a life of incontinence resulting in social ostracism and destitution.

The only way to prevent the estimated 8,000 – 9,000 new cases of obstetric fistula occurring in Ethiopia each year is to put in place strategies that will ensure women can receive appropriately trained medical help when the time comes for them to deliver their babies.

Training midwives is the key prevention strategy. A century ago Egypt, Sweden and the United Kingdom dramatically reduced the incidence of maternal mortality through the widespread deployment of trained midwives.

My late husband, Reg, and I went to Ethiopia in 1959 to train midwives. We could only train about 10 young women before

the Ethiopian Government had to close the training programme because of a lack of money.

Therefore it has been a great pleasure to me in the last 12 months to see the Hospital establish its own midwifery training college. Although we have started in a small way with the first intake of 12 students commencing in November 2007, this is the Hospital's most important initiative so far towards preventing the scourge of obstetric fistula. It is my prayer that in time the college will contribute significantly to eradicating obstetric fistulae which ruin the lives of so many young rural Ethiopian women.



Hamlin College of Midwives Dean, Annette Bennett and Trainee Midwives

It has taken a long time for the Hospital to be able to establish a residential midwifery college and to develop a comprehensive three year curriculum. It is only because of the faithful and dedicated support of the Australian Fund and the Hospital's other partner organisations around the world that this has been possible.

The size and complexity of the Hospital's activities have expanded enormously over the last few years. As a result, changes are required in how the Hospital is managed. The Hospital Trustees together with the CEO, Mark Bennett, are working hard to put in place the skills, systems and capacity necessary to ensure that the Hospital continues to be effectively managed into the future. The process of change is not always easy and there have been some difficult challenges over the last year. However, I am confident that the changes which are being introduced will secure the Hospital well into the future.

The Board of the Australian Fund supports the Hospital's direction and the work of the Hospital Trustees and the CEO. I have especially appreciated the ongoing friendship, support and

encouragement which David Barnsdall, the Deputy Chairman, and the other Directors have given to me during the course of the past year and their dedication to the task of assisting the Hospital in many and varied ways.

The Australian Fund has been very active this past year and once again has made a very significant contribution to the ongoing work of the Hospital.

My trip to Australia during the year was a wonderful affirmation of the work we are doing and the overwhelming support and appreciation which I received from so many supporters was immensely encouraging to me personally. The past year has been one of further growth and development in spreading amongst the Australian community the message about the plight of the Ethiopian fistula sufferers. The Fund has actively promoted the documentary *A Walk to Beautiful* with a number of screenings being held around Australia. In April I enjoyed the screening of the film in Mudgee with about 400 other members of the audience. The documentary has provided a most effective means of informing many more people about the estimated 2 million women in the developing world who suffer from the 'hidden epidemic' of obstetric fistula.

Many people support the Hospital in many different ways. Whether this support is through donating money, organising fund raising events or knitting the coloured shawls which our patients love to wear and which have become such a feature of life at the Hospital, it all helps the Hospital do its vital work. Therefore it is with sincere gratitude that I thank you for being here this evening to show your support for the work of the Hospital.

I also thank you, and all of the many other supporters of the Hamlin Fistula® Relief and Aid Fund here in Australia, for your continuing support for the work of the Hospital over the past year.

I pray that God will continue to bless the Hospital as we work together to treat and prevent the hidden epidemic of obstetric fistula amongst the poorest women of Ethiopia.

I send my love and warmest good wishes to you all for the coming Christmas season.



Dr E. Catherine Hamlin AC

FROM MARK BENNETT, HOSPITAL CEO

I am pleased to be able to report good progress on many aspects of the Hospital's activities and I thank all our supporters in Australia for their continuing interest and practical support for the work of the Hospital.

Harer

After the official opening of our Harer centre in May there was significant work still to be undertaken to get the centre ready to receive patients. This included completing the kitchen and the lower level of the two storey building. The centre has now been fully equipped and we have installed additional rain water retention and storage capacity on the site.

The centre is now fully operational and Dr Yifru and his team have started to receive patients.



Dr Yifru with Dr Hamlin

Midwifery College

The Midwifery College has now completed one full year of training. The first intake of students completed their initial year of study with a clinical practice module in two locations outside Addis Ababa. The second intake of students took place in October.

Medical services

Since the resignation of some of our senior doctors, Dr Habte and Dr Hailemariam have worked hard and together with the assistance of several visiting specialists including Professor Gordon Williams, they have managed to treat our patient load and tackle some of the longer term cases effectively.

Our hospital is in good shape with bed utilization improving



Professor Gordon Williams, Dr Hailemariam and Dr Habte

HAMLIN FISTULA® RELIEF AND AID FUND

PO Box 965, Wahroonga NSW 2076 Australia | Phone 02 9449 6725 | Fax 02 9440 4764
email: fistulaltd@ozemail.com.au | www.fistulatrust.org
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and the number of patients waiting in accommodation at Desta Mender is now lower than it has been for some time.

Fistula Centre – Mekelle

At the Fistula Centre in Mekelle we have installed the new water plant which has been obtained through the generous assistance of the Australian Fund and it is now ready for testing. The centre's rain water storage capacity has been increased and the water purification and softening equipment will mean that we are now able to use our automatic sterilization equipment. It will also enable us to use our large new washing machine and this will make the job of our laundry staff much easier!

The laundry ... from this



... to this!



Plans for the fifth Hamlin Fistula Centre

We have selected a contractor for the construction of the fifth Hamlin Fistula Centre to be located at Metu in the west of the country near the Sudanese border. We are currently preparing the site for construction. We plan to have the centre opened by early 2010.

Dr Hamlin

You may have read the article about Dr Hamlin in the recent edition of the Good Weekend magazine which reported that she has been taking treatment for TB. She is doing well and



Dr Hamlin with Mark and Annette Bennett

getting back into her regular routine on the wards and working with the fistula women who she loves.

Annette joins me in sending you our best wishes for Christmas and the New Year.

Mark Bennett

FUND ACTIVITIES

The Fund held its annual public meeting on Thursday 13 November at St Thomas' Anglican Church Hall, North Sydney to which about 100 people attended including members



of the local Ethiopian community. Their colourful traditional dress, rhythmic music and tasty Ethiopian food all added to the festive air of the evening. Dr Hamlin's message printed above was read to the audience and Dr Andrew Browning spoke about life in Bahir Dar and his work at the fistula centre there. There was also a DVD presentation by Annette Bennett on the Midwifery College.

As well as continuing to receive financial support and many colourful shawls, the Fund recently received a donation of 18 hospital beds and some other hospital furniture from the Brisbane Waters Private Hospital. With the assistance of the local Rotary Club the beds and furniture were transported to Adelaide and loaded into a large sea container bound for Ethiopia. Arrangements are being made with the Hospital and a local Rotary Club in Addis Ababa to receive the container when it arrives in several months time.

The Directors and staff of the Fund wish you a joyful Christmas and a safe and happy New Year and thank you for supporting the work of the Hospital in so many ways throughout the year.

**THE FUND'S OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED FROM
WEDNESDAY 24 DECEMBER 2008 UNTIL
MONDAY 12 JANUARY 2009.**

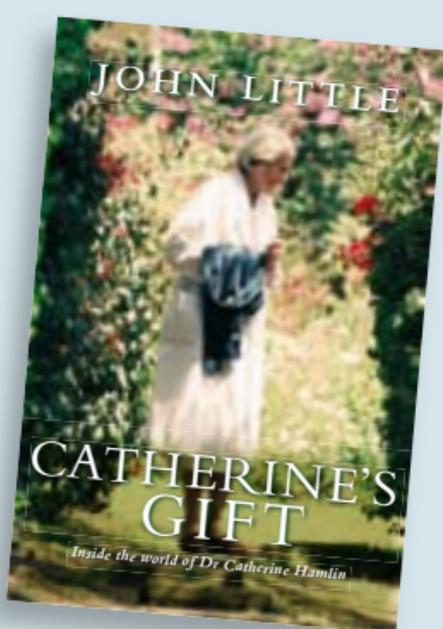
Other Christmas ideas

A 'friendship gift' this Christmas?

If you would like to make a donation to the work of the Hospital as a Christmas gift for a family member or friend, then complete the reverse side of this slip and return it to the Fund. We will include with your tax deductible receipt a greeting card which you can give to your family member or friend.

Catherine's Gift

John Little's new book about daily life at the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital is now available through regular retail outlets or from the Fund. The Fund's price per copy is \$35 (including postage and GST).



A Walk to Beautiful

The Fund now has copies of the DVD available for sale at \$30 each (including postage and GST).

To Order

The 2009 Golden Jubilee Calendar, 'Catherines Gift' and the DVD of *A Walk to Beautiful* can be purchased either

- Via our website www.fistulatrust.org
- By completing the reverse side of this slip and returning it to the Fund
- By contacting the Fund's office on 02 9449 6725.

Requests for a 'friendship greeting card' and purchase orders for the Calendar, 'Catherines Gift' or DVD of *A Walk to Beautiful* must be received by the Fund by Wednesday 18 December in time to post to you for Christmas.

Please accept the attached donation for the work of the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital through the

HAMLIN FISTULA® RELIEF & AID FUND

Please post to PO Box 965 Wahroonga NSW 2076

Donations of over \$2 are allowable Income Tax Deductions.

DGR 900484487 (Please print clearly)

Title Mr Mrs Miss Ms Dr Rev
(please circle)

Name _____

Address _____

P/CODE

Phone _____

Gift or Cheque Attached \$ _____

Please send a greeting card with my receipt

Allocate for Hamlin Fistula Int'l Foundation

Send to me suitable wording for a Bequest

Send to me a free DVD and brochures to interest others

I would like to order:

2009 Calendar - \$20.00

A Walk to Beautiful DVD - \$30.00

'Catherine's Gift' - \$35.00

OR Please debit the sum of \$ _____ to my

MasterCard

Visa

CCV*

*three digit security code on the signature strip of your credit card

Name on card _____

Expiry Date _____

Signature _____