



Christmas 2024 News

Christmas Greetings from Australia and Ethiopia



Photo: The work of Hamlin Fistula goes on under the beneficent gaze of its beloved founders, Drs Reg and Catherine Hamlin



As Christmas and the end of 2024 approaches, I would like to share a message with you from Ato Tesfaye Mamo, The Chief Executive Officer of Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia.

“On behalf of Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia, the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital, Desta Mender and the College of Midwives, I express my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who has supported us throughout our journey this year. Your dedication and commitment to the construction of major new facilities at the Hamlin College of Midwives have been instrumental in making this project a reality and inspiring and empowering the next generation of midwives.

This time of year is a wonderful opportunity for reflection and appreciation. I encourage you all to take a moment to celebrate the successes we have achieved together and to look forward to the exciting times ahead. The spirit of Christmas reminds us of the importance of community, compassion, and care – values that are at the core of our mission. Thank you for being a vital part of our community”

I started to work for Hamlin Fistula Australia in 2012 and have been delighted to see the progress made at Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia since I became involved. During 2024 I visited the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital, Desta Mender, the Hamlin College of Midwives and a couple of regional hospitals and birth centres. I was also able to participate in a major meeting of international partners which support the work in Ethiopia with financial and practical assistance. It is always a pleasure to meet those “on the ground” and learn more about the care they provide the needy women of Ethiopia.

From everyone at Hamlin Fistula Australia I thank you for your interest and support over the past year. I wish you a joyous and blessed Christmas and every good wish for a happy and peaceful New Year.

Our office in Sydney will close for the Christmas / New Year break at 1:00 pm Tuesday 24th December 2024 and re-open on Tuesday 14th January 2025.

With my best wishes

Doug Marr

Executive Officer Hamlin Fistula Australia Limited



Photo: The new kitchen takes shape, but still has a long way to go



Photo: Some of the building work has further to go to completion...



Photo: ...but some is almost finished.



Photo: Only finishing details to add

The building goes on

The Hamlin College of Midwives has been undergoing significant development over the past year, and we are excited to share the latest updates on our building progress. This project is not just about constructing a new facility; it represents a commitment to advancing midwifery education, improving resources for students and faculty, and ultimately enhancing the quality of care for the women of Ethiopia giving birth to the next generation.

The vision for the new college building is rooted in creating a learning environment that fosters collaboration, innovation and excellence in midwifery practice. The design incorporates new residential accommodation, library, lecture hall, training centre, together with modification of classrooms, new and improved kitchen and dining spaces, a generator house, and comfortable study areas that cater to diverse learning styles. Another significant addition is high quality fencing to prevent access to the compound by hyenas and other wild animals. We believe a well-designed educational space can significantly enhance the learning experience for our students, enabling them to thrive as future midwives.

The College looks forward to hosting events in the new spaces. These events will not only showcase the commitment to midwifery education but also promote awareness and understanding of the vital role midwives play in maternal and infant health.

The ongoing development at the Hamlin College of Midwives is a testament to our dedication to excellence in midwifery education. We remain committed to our mission of training skilled midwives who will make a lasting impact in their communities. Together, with the support of our partners and donors, we are poised to usher in a new era of midwifery education that prioritises quality, accessibility, and community engagement. We look forward to sharing more updates as we progress and to celebrating the positive changes this new facility will bring.

Tsige's new start

My name is Tsige Beyene and I come from Oromia region, Bulehora zone, Karcha district. I got married at the age of 13, and shortly after, I became pregnant. I was in labour for three days.

In my community, it is common to give birth at home, and there's usually no need to visit a health centre. Eventually, I went to the health centre, but they referred me to the hospital, saying my situation was beyond their control. At the hospital, they told me the baby was in distress and used force to deliver the child. Unfortunately, I gave birth to a stillborn baby, which is how I developed fistula.

Because of the fistula, I had a very bad smell. I didn't visit my neighbours for coffee, and I avoided going to the market. I stayed home in isolation and stopped doing the things I used to enjoy. Instead, I cried all day and night. People commented on the smell, and I never went to church or funerals. My husband questioned why I had this condition, saying that other women gave birth without any problems. He asked where I got this disease. He insisted that it was my problem not his, and because of it, he said he didn't want to live with me anymore. As a result, he married someone else and now has two children, while I have been living alone in isolation.

There was a conflict in my area, and several organisations provided support for us. During this time, they asked about the challenges we faced. I shared that I experienced a bad smell and felt isolated and sad because of my condition. After diagnosing me, they informed me that there was a cure available. They contacted the Yirgalem Hamlin Fistula Centre, and an ambulance came directly to my village to take me to the hospital. I had never heard of this hospital before. I had visited other health centres but received no help from them. When I arrived, I was warmly welcomed. They gave me a bath, provided pyjamas, soap, a blanket, and a pair of slippers. The care I received at the centre exceeded what I had experienced from my family. They provided meals, changed the sheets regularly, and offered breakfast, lunch, and dinner - all at no cost to me.

Three months after I was cured and returned home, I received a call to come to Desta Mender for training. They provided all the logistics, including free transportation, to bring me here. Now, I am taking the training based



on my own choices. I never went to school, so I couldn't read or write. Here, I am learning sewing, embroidery, cooking, and poultry training – skills I had never practised in my village. Before I came to Desta Mender, I had to memorise my family's phone numbers and share them with others so they could contact my family.

Here at Desta Mender, I have learned to read and write and make calls myself. I can write my name, phone numbers, and other important information thanks to the training I am receiving. When I complete my training and return to my village, I have a big plan to rent a house where I can prepare and sell food. Alongside catering, I also want to do embroidery and sewing to create and sell bags. There is so much to do! And now I can do it all, thanks to the Hamlin Fistula Centre. Thank you, everyone.

Reno rescue!

Have you ever had your kitchen renovated? If you know the feeling of waiting for a new and more efficient kitchen, spare a thought for the cooks at the Hamlin College of Midwives, who continue to turn our delicious and healthy meals under trying conditions.

Mrs. Bilen Abayneh, a head cook at the College told us,

“We can’t wait to start our activities in the new kitchen. Currently, we are using the old kitchen, but it is not sufficient for preparing all the food we need. We are looking forward to having a nice and comfortable kitchen that will make all the cooks happy. The new kitchen will also provide students with a spacious café where they can eat and spend time with their friends. The new kitchen will offer us more space for all our activities and will be easier to clean. Right now, it is quite messy, but we will be able to maintain cleanliness once the new kitchen is ready. We hope that the new kitchen will make a significant difference. Students will be thrilled to have a large café that accommodates everyone and a kitchen that appeals to their appetites. Most of our students enjoy eating Injera, a traditional Ethiopian flat bread often served with a meat sauce. Fortunately, all of our students are well-mannered and appreciate the meals our cooks prepare, although some have special preferences. I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to our donors and partners who are supporting the construction of this kitchen. Words cannot fully express my gratitude, and we are all thankful for your support.”

This Christmas, a small donation will help speed the completion of the new kitchen and continue to fuel the work of the College of Midwives, Dr Catherine Hamlin’s great gift to Ethiopia.



Photo: Making Injera in the old kitchen



Photo: There are not too many cooks, and they never spoil the broth!



Photo: Vegetable preparation is much more enjoyable when done outside



Photo: The old kitchen is on its way out