

Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital



Newsletter | June 2008



FROM DR CATHERINE HAMLIN AC

My dear friends in Australia,

Since I last wrote to you I have spent much of my time in Australia. For me, of course, this was very special and I was able to do much there and in New Zealand too, to make our "cause" known and indeed to raise much interest and also much money! This sounds very mercenary, but I have no shame in being a beggar for such a cause.

AUSTRALIAN VISIT

While in Australia I was accompanied by James Grainger, the Executive Officer of our Australian Trust, who was indeed an enormous help, arranging everything in such a way that I quite felt I was having a good holiday! I enjoyed visiting many capital cities, meeting lots of old friends and making new ones. It was so good to see many of you who have been our supporters and friends for so long.



The Great Hall – a full house for Dr Hamlin

supporters who have such a concern for our fistula women. When in Canberra I was able to meet the Hon. Bob McMullan, MP who is now the Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance and to personally thank him for the new Australian Government's pledge to continue supporting our work and so ease the plight of many more fistula sufferers.

Public meetings were arranged in Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne and Adelaide where I was able to speak about the plight of the poor fistula women and the work of the Hospital. I

was greatly encouraged by the enthusiasm of so many people for our new midwifery college. Now at last through the generous support of our donors we are able to do something about preventing the terrible injuries suffered by women in obstructed labour.



The Governor and Dr Hamlin enter The Great Hall

The Reception in The Great Hall at Sydney University in March, was a very special event which Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir, Governor of New South Wales and Chancellor of the University, very kindly attended. The day was so bright and sunny and it was wonderful to have afternoon tea in The Quadrangle afterwards with so many kind and generous



Dr Hamlin with the Hon. Bob McMullan MP

When visiting New Zealand I was able to speak to many people in Christchurch, Hastings and Auckland. James also came with me to New Zealand, where we met our Trustees there, who happened to all live in Christchurch.

To all our supporters I thank you so much for your continuing and generous support. It is a tremendous encouragement to me personally and to all our fine hardworking hospital staff and a further confirmation of our work here in Ethiopia.

RETURNING TO ADDIS ABABA

Coming back to Addis Ababa on April 26th and being given my usual warm and touching welcome by the staff was an experience which is always heart-warming. This time the tea-party was combined with a farewell for Dr. Rahill (Rachel in English) who is an Ethiopian doctor trained and working in America. She has been on our staff for 9 months and we hope may one day come back in a more permanent capacity. She is beautiful, charming and a good fistula surgeon now, so she will be greatly missed here.

Later, on Sunday 4th May she and her American husband had a traditional wedding celebration here, which many of us attended in the grounds of the beautiful 'Tropical Gardens' venue, often used for wedding receptions. Although married in America she wanted to give her family the joy of this extra wedding reception in her own country. It was a lovely day only marred by a downpour of rain just as guests arrived.

We were well looked after and enjoyed a lavish lunch laid out on long tables with a mixture of Ethiopian and American food. We sat with friends not far from the bridal party and then watched the traditional dancing and listened to a few short speeches. The bride was indeed a lovely picture and her handsome groom decked out in an Ethiopian bright waist coat. Having my son Richard and his wife Diana with me was also very special and certainly Diana's first experience of an Ethiopian wedding reception, albeit a wealthy one.

MEETING OF THE FISTULA HOSPITAL'S INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS

It was only a few days after my return that we had our Partners International Meeting (PIM). Representatives from all our overseas Trusts met here at the Hospital in our chapel tukul, (a round house with a thatched roof built in the architectural

style of Ethiopia) and we and they, gave reports on the work done by the Hospital and each Trust. The Chairman of our Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital Trust, Ato Tekalign Gedamu, gave the opening address in his inimitable and erudite way, preceded by a short welcome speech by me.

It was so exciting for me to see here at the Hospital a number of the Board members of the Australian Trust, who I had recently been with in Sydney. Two of the New Zealand trustees also came over for the PIM meeting. Janet Baskill, who is a former missionary in Tanzania and Errold Paynter, with his talented artistic wife Ellen. She also is a tireless fund raiser for us and left here with a bag full of Ethiopian jewellery and scarves to take home to sell and raise money for our work. We had arranged to have things to buy during these few PIM days nicely set out on tables either in the garden at lunch time or quickly moved on to our long hospital verandah as the weather was not very cooperative. We often had heavy



Delegates enjoy lunch on the lawn

rain which on one day started just as lunch was all set out on the lawn. This caused some chaos but there were sunny times too when our beautiful garden was enjoyed by all these important visitors.

Mark Bennett (our CEO) did a fantastic job with the help of his devoted administrative staff. They all worked overtime to get everything ready with such good-will and commitment. We shall soon take them for a celebration meal as a small way to thank them.

All the sessions we had were chaired by members of the Hospital Board and each followed by a discussion time when questions were asked and answered. It was an opportunity to air views and to plan for the future.

Trips were also organized to Desta Mender, to see the progress there and to visit our recently established Midwifery College. Annette Bennett and the other midwives and staff excelled in their hospitality and their information about progress made since this important and vital college opened this year.



PIM morning tea at the Midwifery College

Later on we were provided by the staff of Desta Mender under Ato Ephraim's capable management, with a delicious lunch in the attractive and spacious meeting tukul. Those who had visited Desta Mender before were pleased to see what progress has been made recently and so many new ideas and projects already in place and flourishing.

A few members of our overseas Trusts visited some of our Outreach Fistula Hospitals in Bahir Dar, Mekele and Yirgalem.

OPENING OF THE HARAR FISTULA CENTRE

We all had a wonderful day on Friday 9th May when we chartered a plane and flew to Harar to open our fourth provincial Fistula Centre.

This was a very special day and I am sure enjoyed by everyone. Our Administrator, Ato Abebe Gesit with his team of helpers did a great job and everything ran smoothly. We had a sunny lovely day cutting the ribbon after listening to speeches and then viewing the beautiful Centre designed by our architect Ato Yoseph Bereded to fit around some lovely large established trees and built where possible, in the arched style of Harar buildings.

The Harar Centre was paid for mostly by Ethiopians living



Dr Hamlin with Yoseph Bereded (the architect) and Richard Hamlin

in America (the Tesfa Ineste group) so it was appropriate that Woizero Abaynesh Asrat was with us from this group and she made a great speech. Dr. Yifru Terefe, who will be in charge of the Centre



Dr Hamlin and Mark Bennett, Hospital CEO, at the opening of Harar Fistula Centre

was there with our two trained and experienced nurses, with their team of nursing aides, all looking sweet in new uniforms. This is such a change from their previous lives being a poor, sad and abandoned fistula sufferer, to now be somebody with a mission in life, trained to look after and care for women and girls with the same suffering they had all endured. Such nursing aides are in all our Centres and all so dedicated and many very skilled and capable.

We are immensely grateful for Tesfa Ineste and those who contributed.

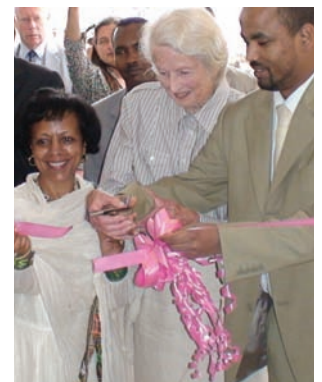
Since the PIM I have enjoyed being more of a clinician doing outpatients and meeting the stream of injured mothers that

arrive daily. I have also been back in the theatre operating with a trainee from Jimma and Dr Habte. Our theatre staff are a joy to work with and gave me such help and care and a welcome for my first day in the theatre since my trip away. They are a great team and I felt at home and useful again!

One sad story before I finish. After the PIM, my son Richard and his wife, Diana and I went away for a three day weekend in Yirgalem, as they had not seen our Centre there and we all



Nursing Aides at the new Harar Centre



Dr Hamlin cuts the ribbon assisted by Abaynesh Asrat and a local dignitary



Dr Yifru, the resident doctor at the new Harar Centre

needed a little break after such a busy time. We went to a beautiful spot outside Yirgalem township called Aregash Lodge. Each house built in the Sidamo style all of bamboo and most unique and attractive and comfortable in a lovely thick bush and forest area, full of monkeys, bush

HAMLIN FISTULA® RELIEF AND AID FUND

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buck, hyenas and birds and flowers and coffee bushes! Such a peaceful and lovely part of God's wonderful and lavish creation, for our enjoyment.

During this time we, of course, visited Dr. Einar who is the Norwegian resident doctor at the Yirgalem Centre. At the Centre we saw a beautiful girl of about 20 lying in a bed after two terrible surgical procedures by a Health Officer (untrained surgically) to deliver a dead baby by a so-called caesarian section. Her injuries from the long labour and from the surgery are horrendous, leaking urine vaginally and abdominally through a still open abdominal wound and yet able to smile and look at me with hope in her eyes. I almost cried to see such unnecessary and man made suffering. Soon afterwards Dr. Einar brought this poor patient to us at Addis Ababa when he came to the capital for the Norwegian National Day celebrations at the Norwegian Embassy.

My hope is that we can restore this girl, but it may be a long and formidable procedure. How we need our midwives! There is also a great need for Health Officers and GPs to be trained in safe surgery and the delivery of dead babies vaginally. This in my opinion is always possible.

With my love, and my thanks and my request that your prayers to our great God will continue for us all here and the enormous task still before us.

May God bless you all for your faithful support, without which this work will fail.

Dr. E. Catherine Hamlin



FUND ACTIVITIES

A Walk to Beautiful

Several thousand supporters of the work of the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital have now taken the opportunity to learn more about obstetric fistula by seeing the feature length documentary *A Walk to Beautiful*.

The next screening of this award winning documentary will be in **Tamworth NSW on Sunday 15 June 2008**. Details are available on our website. More screenings are being planned around Australia and details of these will be posted on our website as they become available to us.

OTHER FUND RAISING EVENTS

The Hamlin Fistula® Relief and Aid Fund is very pleased that so many people came to see, hear and meet Dr Hamlin during her recent tour of Australia. The support was tremendous and a great encouragement.

The Fund is also very appreciative of the many people who think of novel ways by which to raise money to support the work of Dr Hamlin and the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital. Details of two such events which are coming up in the next month or so are set out below. See our website for further details.

The proceeds from these events will be donated to the Fund to continue the Hospital's work.

27th Annual Doll Collectors Fair

26th and 27th July 2008

10am to 4.30pm.

Blacktown Leisure Centre, Stanhope

Gardens, Cnr Stanhope Parkway and Sentry Drive.

Free shuttle bus from Blacktown Railway Station.



Art for Ethiopia

An exciting and colourful exhibition of well priced works by a variety of artists.

The Red Door Gallery, 24 Morris Street, Summer Hill, NSW

Thursday 7th August to Sunday 10th August 2008

Gallery hours: Thursday, Friday and Sunday 10am to 4pm, Saturday 10am to 6pm

Enquiries phone Sue Loane 02 9797 7862 or Winsome Tong 02 9488 8824

Dr Hamlin's hope for the future



Trainee midwives

The Hamlin College of Midwives is the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital's most important initiative so far towards preventing obstetric fistulae amongst Ethiopian women.

It costs approximately \$4,000 per year to train and accommodate one midwifery student.

Your donation to the work of the Hospital will assist the Hospital to train midwives and so help prevent obstetric fistulae and maternal morbidity.

A Walk to Beautiful

Next screening in Tamworth NSW

Sunday 15 June 2008

See www.fistulatrust.org for details

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.

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“Every cent of every dollar donated to the Fund is available to support the work of the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital”