

Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital



Newsletter | June 2009 | Golden Jubilee Edition



DR HAMLIN'S LETTER

My dear Friends in Australia

Since my last letter I have been to England for the wedding of my grand-daughter Sarah, an enjoyable and exciting three weeks!

Now I am back in usually our hottest month, but this year it has been broken up with spells of rain and as I write the sun is shining brightly and my garden sparkling with rain drops from last night.

THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL AND OTHER VISITORS

We have had a busy few months with work, and many visitors. The most exciting visit was from Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce AC, the Governor-General of Australia, and her husband who spent a morning at our Hospital. I was privileged to have met her the night before at a private dinner in her hotel, where we were able to talk together. She was very interested in the work of our Hospital and our Outreach Fistula Centres.

Her Excellency toured the wards and spoke to several patients, showing concern and sympathy, and much interest in all the various departments of our Hospital. All were impressed by her kindness and graciousness.

Later we met again briefly at a state lunch banquet, given by the President of Ethiopia and held in the late Emperor's Palace. It was a grand affair in a huge hall with a throne at one end and a sort of minstrel gallery at the other where a band played throughout a seven course lunch!

In early April we had many distinguished visitors who were

attending the International Meeting of Parliamentarians being held in Addis Ababa. First we welcomed a big group of Commissioners for Health from the European and African Unions, then, in the 2nd week of April about ten Swedish Parliamentarians toured the Hospital followed by those from



Celebrate Dr Hamlin's Golden Jubilee

The Hamlin Fistula Relief and Aid Fund would like to invite you to join us in celebrating Dr Hamlin's Golden Jubilee in Ethiopia.

Please join in *Lighting a Candle for Africa* at

St Alban's Church Hall

Corner of Tryon Road and Lindfield Avenue, Lindfield

7.00 - 9.00pm

Thursday 25 June 2009

\$30.00 per head (includes food and drinks)

Purchase tickets by contacting the office on 9449 6725
or online at www.fistulatrust.org

the U.K. who promised to bring our work and our needs before Parliament in the near future! Next a very large group from the United States Congress and Senate arrived with much security in evidence – police on huge motor bikes and plain-clothed police intermingling with the crowd so we could not tell whether we were speaking to the senators or with security people! Next we entertained a group from the Australian Parliament, and felt relaxed with them! These included the Speaker of the Parliament and some important Ministers. Finally a group from France came with the French Ambassador to Ethiopia, and some UNFPA high officials as well – all speaking French!

So after such visits surely the “whole world” must know that these tragic patients exist! We welcome such visitors as our policy and our desire is to inform the whole world that this neglected huge group of young women exists in the Developing World – and that once we know we should feel a moral obligation to do something to relieve such suffering.

JUNIPER CAFÉ

In our last letter we told you of the establishment and opening of our Juniper Café at Desta Mender. This has been an enormous undertaking, but also a huge success. This has been due to the generous support of Soroptimist International and the kind voluntary hard work of Rae Newman, who is now recognised as a wonderful cook, organiser, purchaser and trainer. I know all our staff would endorse this opinion, especially our Medical Director, Gordon Williams who thinks her Australian meat pies the best he has ever tasted. Having travelled the world before settling here, he should know a lot about pies! Sunday lunch at the café after church is an enjoyable experience with the lake to look at, and some sweet girls to wait on us, as we sit at tables under a spreading acacia tree! I look forward to welcoming Margaret Lobo the International Soroptimist President who is coming to join in our Jubilee Celebrations to be held in a few days time. Ato Ephram the Manager of Desta Mender, and his bride had their wedding reception there. It was a perfect setting and everyone enjoyed the lavish lunch and met his beautiful and accomplished bride with her attendants. I heard the party and the dancing went on into the evening. So with two weddings a week apart, I felt quite a connoisseur of such events!

BACK TO WORK

You may be wondering if we do any work here! – from my description of a social life with visitors, and weddings, and supping with Governors! But our Hospital and staff are indeed very busy and our Outreach Centres are more than fulfilling all we expected from them. We are missing Dr Andrew Browning at Bahir Dar, but our doctors share the work there taking turns in visiting and operating on the women who flock there from the huge and populous Gojam Province with its 23 million people!

Here in Addis Ababa new patients arrive daily and so our operating theatre is working 4 days every week, with often long lists. Today I did my first operation since returning. It turned out to be a difficult case, but with one of our skilled theatre-trained nursing aides as my assistant, we managed and I hope this young woman will be cured. She was such a good patient and endured two and a half hours under a spinal anaesthetic without a murmur!

GOLDEN JUBILEE EVENTS

Over the next few days representatives from many organisations and groups which support the Hospital will be arriving from around the world to share in the Golden Jubilee events which have been organized to mark the 50 years since my late husband, Reg, and I first arrived in Ethiopia.



Dr Hamlin and her son, Richard, award Mamitu for her service since the opening of the Hospital. Sixteen staff have been with the Hospital since its opening in 1975.



Dr Hamlin cuts the 50 year anniversary cake with (L to R) Ato Abebe, Mark Bennett, Wz Genet and Richard Hamlin.

At this special time I want to thank you once again for your interest and concern, and for your help in this really huge medical cause so long neglected. With our gracious and loving God to guide and help us, we hope to continue to be His agents in bringing relief to more and more women, and to keep a flame of love burning here in Ethiopia, and indeed in the whole of Africa.

With my love.

Catherine Hamlin

MESSAGE FROM HER EXCELLENCY MS QUENTIN BRYCE AC - GOVERNOR - GENERAL OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

I am delighted to have the opportunity to salute Dr Hamlin on her Golden Jubilee.

On my recent trip to Africa I visited Dr Hamlin in Addis Ababa. Her every gesture is full of grace and kindness and we all felt drawn to her and deeply aware of her inner strength. She and I had dinner together. We talked about the things women talk



Governor General, Ms Quentin Bryce AC with Dr Catherine Hamlin

about: our families, our lives, our growing up, and our growing older - and of course, our grandchildren.

The next day I went to her famous hospital. I walked arm-in-arm with her in her garden of bougainvilleas and fuchsias. She told me about the women who come to her - broken and shattered, ostracised by their families - and how they find tenderness, healing, and dignity there. Some stay to be trained and to work in the hospital. When they arrive - after walking many miles - they are given a knitted patchwork blanket, made often by Australian women. This blanket may be the most valuable possession they ever own. It's a symbol of love from women far away.

I gave Dr Hamlin gifts my sister had sent with me - needles and threads, embroidery cottons and wools, from her and her friends, who've been supporters of the Hospital for 50 years. These gifts - simple in themselves - articulate profound connections, strong ties of kinship and generosity stretching from Australia to Ethiopia and beyond.

Dr Hamlin's work is vital in keeping families and communities intact, ensuring that women have access to proper healthcare and treatment, and receive the attention they need when they fulfil their unique and special childbearing role.

The Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital recognises the importance of women and girls in building economic, social and cultural strength. Women shoulder tremendous responsibility and nurture their lives and futures of children in profound ways. Where women are supported and empowered, whole societies reap the benefit.

Dr Hamlin has spent her life translating the finest human values and principles into practice. She stands as a source of courage, support and inspiration to all of us.

Truly a Golden Life.

HAMLIN FISTULA® RELIEF AND AID FUND

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MESSAGE FROM HER EXCELLENCY, PROFESSOR MARIE BASHIR AC CVO

It is indeed a pleasure to acknowledge with gratitude the outstanding work of Dr Catherine Hamlin AC, for her great contribution to the quality and to the dignity of life of so many Ethiopian women.

These women would surely otherwise have been outcasts and rejected by their own society.

The fact that Dr Hamlin has gone on to train so many in nursing and health care skills is further testimony to her considerable humanity and vision. Indeed, the value of the work undertaken by her late husband Dr Reginald Hamlin and herself in the hospital which they established in Addis Ababa so long ago can never be adequately estimated. Her dedication and commitment have now touched the lives of countless families and communities, and she has earned a place in the heart and history of the country.

Although a person of considerable modesty and sensitivity, I know that Dr Hamlin holds a peerless place in the minds and hearts of her fellow medical women.

Our warmest congratulations and best wishes are with her on the celebratory occasion of her Golden Jubilee.

MOTHER AND DAUGHTER CURED TOGETHER

Last month the Hospital received two patients who looked similar. It was thought that they might be sisters but when asked the older of the two replied, "yes we are related, she is my eldest daughter".

Muche, the mother is 40 years old and has had a fistula for eight years. After an exhausting five day labour she delivered a still born child. Her husband, even though she was the mother of his four other children, abandoned her. Muche was ostracised by her village and endured a lonely and shameful existence.

Hawa, who is 25 years old, had been a first hand witness to her mother's suffering and loss and feared that she would end up with the same problem as her. Her fear was realised on her



Muche and Hawa

fifth delivery when she too had an obstructed labour. After an excruciating four days in labour her child was still born and she was left with a fistula.

Fortunately for Hawa she only had to live with this problem for 7 months. As part of the Hospital's prevention program a public health officer in Bahir Dar had organised an educational radio program in the Amhara region and Hawa and Muche learned about the opportunity to be healed.

Much hard work still needs to be done to prevent the terrible injuries caused by obstructed labour. One way of doing this is through education and creating greater awareness about obstructed labour so that young girls like Hawa will not face the same problems as their mothers.

GOLDEN JUBILEE TEA TOWELS



Fistula patients with their tea towel drawings

The drawings on these tea towels are the work of the fistula patients at the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital.

Maryanne Ayres, a loyal supporter from Sydney, visited the Hospital and conducted the drawing workshop with the assistance of some of the hospital staff.

Most of the patients are from rural areas where literacy levels are low and little importance is placed on girls attending school. Some of the patients who drew the designs had never even held a pencil before.

The tea towel represents the colours of the Ethiopian flag and the blue also represents our Hamlin Fistula logo. The drawings are printed on a square design reminiscent of the patients' shawls. Tea Towels can be purchased via the Fund's website or the detachable donation slip.

The Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital would like to acknowledge all our supporters who knit the beautiful shawls that bring such comfort and pleasure to our patients.

HOST YOUR OWN EVENT

Celebrate Dr Hamlin's Golden Jubilee in Ethiopia by hosting a 'Lighting a Candle' event.

Our National 'Light a Candle' campaign is now up and running with orders coming in across the country. Thank you to those that have placed their orders and we wish you great success with your chosen event.

The special Golden Jubilee packs include a beautiful Jubilee candle, gold logo pin and Hamlin key ring for each guest. There is also a DVD message from Dr Hamlin, Ethiopian coffee to serve at the event and a Jubilee tea towel for the organiser.

Golden Jubilee packs can be purchased in 5 and 10 person packs for \$100 and \$200 respectively plus postage to your area.

Orders can be placed on line at www.fistulatrust.org or by phoning (02) 9449 6725.

Pack Costs incl postage

- 5 person pack NSW - \$115.00
- 10 person pack NSW - \$215.00
- 5 person pack VIC - \$120.00
- 10 person pack VIC - \$220.00
- 5 person pack QLD/TAS/SA - \$125.00
- 10 person pack QLD/TAS/SA - \$225.00
- 5 person pack WA/NT - \$130.00
- 10 person pack WA/NT - \$235.00

Thank you to all of our volunteers who have helped in putting these packs together.

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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I would like to order:

Golden Jubilee, 5 Person Pack
\$100.00 + postage (see reverse of slip)

Golden Jubilee, 10 Person Pack
\$200.00 + postage (see reverse of slip)

Ticket/s to Golden Jubilee Event 25/06/09
- \$30.00 ea

Jubilee Tea Towel - \$20.00 (incl. GST + postage)

OR Please debit the sum of \$ _____ to my

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Visa

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

Name on card _____

Expiry Date _____

Signature _____