

# Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital



Newsletter | March 2009



Abebush

## DR HAMLIN'S LETTER

### *My Dear Friends in Australia*

It is a pleasure for me to once again write a few words for this newsletter. I am thankful that we have such interested and kind friends in Australia who continue to support us through donations of money to our Fund in Australia, enabling our work to continue and to expand, others who help us with their knitting, making colourful shawls, so useful and so appreciated, or attractive patchwork bed covers! I know too, that many pray for us and our poor patients, and so in whatever way you help I send my thanks. We are greatly blessed to have such supporters, and to worship a God who loves these poor women and girls, and who has supplied our needs so lavishly over the years.

### **Abebush gains strength**

I have just walked down to my house from the main ward where I saw Abebush, the little patient mentioned in our December newsletter by Dr. Andrew Browning. She greeted me with a sweet smile as she grabbed my hand! She has had a slight set back over the last week, with an electrolyte imbalance due to a bout of dysentery, but now has recovered, and the smile returned to her face. She is gaining weight with the high nutrition diet she has been receiving. Her knee and hip contractions are much improved and her legs almost straight now, but her ankles are still very stiff and rigid, with only a little movement in her toes. She is very insistent in starting again her daily wheel chair trips to the physiotherapy department. One day I hope to be able to tell you that her troubles are over, but I know this is a good way off yet!

## A model patient

Another special patient also greeted me warmly, this morning, asking to go home. She arrived a few weeks ago with a man from her village (probably a relative). She is totally deaf and also dumb, so we needed this man to tell us her history. We asked him to be sure to come back in three weeks when she should be cured, as we would have no way of getting her back to her distant village. Since then every day she greets me and through her actions tells me "I want to go home"! She has been a model patient and so happy to be dry and normal again. We are arranging for her to see a specialist about her deafness in case there is a way she can be helped.

I was touched by her sad story – she became pregnant through being raped, and then was a victim of obstructed labour ending in a stillbirth, and a bladder fistula as a result of the long labour. Her mother cared for her as best she could for 5 years in a wee room attached to her small hut. There this kind man found her. When I thanked him for bringing her, he told me that his wife was cured here at the Hospital and they now have a lovely baby! So his gratitude was expressed by this kind act. I

### *Lighting a Candle - The Hamlin Golden Jubilee*

The Fund invites supporters of the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital to consider holding a *Lighting a Candle* event as a way of marking the Hamlin Golden Jubilee and supporting the Hospital.

Please see back page for further details.

was dubious about him coming back in the specified time (we had given him money for the journey, and also for his first trip – a long distance from Addis Ababa). So I was delighted to see him this morning! and felt ashamed that I had not trusted his promise to return! He will now wait until she has seen the ear specialist.

### Some special visitors

January was a busy month, not only with new patients arriving, but also with many visitors. A very special one visited us on January 28th – the Australian Foreign Minister the Hon. Stephen Smith MP. He had especially requested to visit our Midwifery College, with many others from his office, the Australian Ambassador from Nairobi, an AusAID representative and a high official from the Australian Embassy in South Africa. So it was a big party of important visitors!

After visiting our hospital we all got into various vehicles and swept out to Desta Mender with a police escort in front and behind, clearing a way for us! It was an exciting afternoon, when at tea in the College library, the Minister gave us the wonderful news that we are to receive a big donation, through AusAID especially for new buildings at the College and for antenatal clinics in the countryside where our midwives will work when their 3 year course is finished. This filled us with enormous gratitude and joy! and so ended a day of pleasure and excitement.



The Foreign Minister with Dr Hamlin and a fistula patient.

Unbelievably, a few weeks later we had another visitor from the Australian Government – this time the Minister for Defence, the Hon. Joel Fitzgibbon MP. So another very pleasant afternoon was spent with a tour of our main hospital, ending with tea on the lawn. We are all excited by the interest of our Government in the needs of the African Continent, and of course we especially think of Ethiopia and its needs.

### Soroptimists – Restoring Dignity

Our new Juniper Café is soon to be opened near the lake at Desta Mender, and set among many juniper trees!

It is near our teaching or conference centre where we hope to attract groups, who want a pleasant place to hold a day conference, and where they can buy food from our café. We are enormously grateful to the Soroptimist International organisation for raising all the money for this café through the 2007 and 2008 President's Day Appeals, called "Restoring Dignity". We want to thank the President of the Soroptimists for those 2 years, Margaret Lobo, for choosing the Hospital to be the recipient of this large donation – which also paid for a hard-top vehicle for use at Desta Mender. We hope Ms. Lobo will visit us for some celebrations in May or June and will then be able to unveil a plaque in the café telling of the assistance provided by so many Soroptimist women.

We are also most grateful to Rae Newman, from Canberra, who has done all the work in a voluntary capacity, in training the girls from Desta Mender who will be the future cooks and managers of the café. Rae has also worked hard at selecting all the equipment and furniture we need for the café – kitchen, and storerooms and an attractive eating area with tables and colourful table cloths!

We are sure this will be a great attraction, not only to help us financially, but to make known the plight of so many fistula sufferers in this great country. We ate there a few days ago, after holding our weekly management meeting in the conference room. We had a delicious lunch, eating true Australian meat pies, and other delicacies, all made by the girls under Rae's tutorship!

I have just realised this is our first letter in the New Year – so I send you all our warm greetings, and wish you much joy, and may God be with each of you through the months ahead.

*Catherine Hamlin*

Dr E. Catherine Hamlin AC

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The Fund joins Dr Hamlin in expressing its grateful appreciation to AusAID, Soroptimist International and all the Fund's other supporters for their generous assistance towards the work of the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital.

## JUNIPER CAFÉ

Soroptimists all over the world have enthusiastically supported International President Margaret Lobo's 'Restoring Dignity' appeal. This has made a very significant contribution towards restoring hope and dignity to the women of Desta Mender who have long term effects from the devastating injuries suffered during prolonged obstructed labour.

The money raised has been provided to the Hospital via the Australian Fund and has covered the cost of constructing and equipping the café as well as a much needed new four wheel drive vehicle for use at the Desta Mender village.

Canberra resident Rae Newman and her husband, Winston, have been living in Addis Ababa for the last eight months. Rae has been setting up the



The Juniper Café

Juniper Café and most importantly training a number of young fistula women who live at Desta Mender to cook and run the café. Winston has been teaching high school students at the local Bingham Academy where he and Rae have also been living in an apartment.

Rae writes about her experiences in helping to make the Juniper Café a reality.

*Winston and I arrived in Addis Ababa last August. Since then I have been working with the women of Desta Mender, the hospital staff and particularly the Desta Mender manager Ato Ephraim Aklilu to set up the new café. At time progress has been slow with lots of unexpected obstacles along the way but it is very pleasing to see our efforts and particularly those of the young trainee women coming to fruition.*

*Our apartment at Bingham has been brilliant! The kitchen is quite large with 3 work areas. The oven is good and I have acquired a second oven shelf – not usual in Ethiopian ovens. Miraculously, there is a good space for the women to wash their hands and go to the toilet – an absolute necessity as they still suffer from problems associated with their fistula related injuries.*

*Each week I have been training 3 to 4 Desta Mender women to cook the food that will be served in the café. The fact that they*

*are illiterate rural women means that cultural relevance is a mystery to them. However, gradually over the months they have learnt about technique and measurement and so how to follow a recipe. The Aussie pies I have been teaching them to make have been quite a hit! Certainly there are no others in Addis. I have suddenly become very mean about sharing the recipe! Even so the women have no appetite for the food we prepare as injera (the local flat bread staple food) is about all they have ever eaten. Putting a decoration on a pie or a cake is a total enigma to them. In spite of all, I am immensely fond of each one – each an individual with all the quirks of human personality – fascinating!*



Rae Newman with the café staff

*We have been holding a 'mock café' in our dining room with Bingham staff eager to be test customers. This has been very successful. The women have done brilliantly at welcoming their 'customers', serving the food and drinks and they have really acted out the role – they are so sweet and look so nice in their white aprons and caps. I am really proud of the way they are shaping up.*

*Ato Ephraim and I have worked together planning and buying the many items that are needed for the café. At times we would choose particular items after carefully comparing quality, cost and availability only to find that the quantity needed was not actually available. Last week we had no running water for 70 hours and no power. One learns to live with it as these conditions are the norm for millions of people here.*

*As Bingham is in a built up area, I make opportunities for the young women to go out into the market for a walk and a look at society – just so they feel they are citizens of the world just like everyone else. They usually come back happy and smiling.*

*We have had to organise a system for ordering and paying at the café since none of the women has been capable of receiving cash and giving change. Zuriash, the teacher at Desta Mender, is working on this in class using a system of coloured tokens and a very simple menu.*

*There is much more to setting up a café and getting it going*

## HAMLIN FISTULA® RELIEF AND AID FUND

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than I realised, especially given the trainees and their unique situation. The challenge has been enormous but profoundly rewarding. Ato Ephraim is a God-given gift to Desta Mender. He really has a "handle" on the whole situation and has such genuine compassion and concern for the women, which is rare for a 30 year old, I think. His vision and enthusiasm for the future is an inspiration.



Rae Newman with trainee cook

Mark Bennett, the Hospital's CEO, and his wife Annette, who is the Dean of the new Midwifery College, are doing a fantastic job! They work so hard and with such Christian commitment. With all that is happening, it seems to me that the Hospital is in its best shape ever.

It has been a great privilege to help with this important project for the Hospital. I have put my heart and soul into it, so I hope the Soroptimists will feel their money has been well used. I hope that some of you will visit the café one day and try a cake or pie!.

Rae Newman

### *Lighting a Candle - The Hamlin Golden Jubilee*

2009 marks the 50th year since Dr Catherine Hamlin and her late husband, Reg, went to Ethiopia and saw for the first time the plight of sufferers of obstetric fistula. The Hamlins decided to stay and help these poor outcast women and in the words of Dr Reg Hamlin OBE to 'light a candle for Africa'.

The Fund invites supporters of the work of Dr Hamlin and the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital to consider organizing a *Lighting a Candle* event with a group of friends or through their local church or club as a way of marking the Hamlin Golden Jubilee and honouring the Hamlins' inspirational work and Christian commitment to helping the poor outcast women of Ethiopia.

A morning or afternoon tea, a dinner or supper would provide a suitable opportunity to hold a Hamlin Golden Jubilee event.

The Fund will provide special Golden Jubilee packs comprising a number of items - including a DVD jubilee message from Dr Hamlin, jubilee candles and badges, Ethiopian coffee and a

special sample tea towel with designs drawn by the Hospital's fistula patients.

Golden Jubilee packs will be available from mid May until the end of July and can be purchased in 5 and 10 person packs for \$100 and \$200 respectively, plus postage.

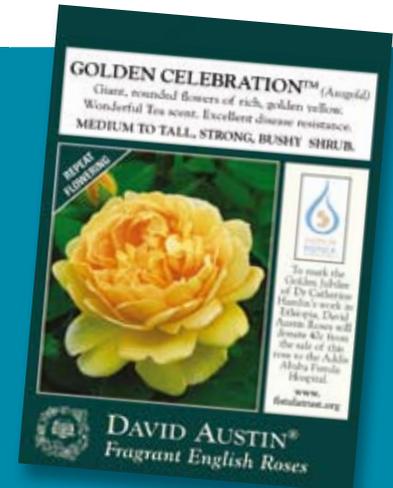
Event organizers will be able to recoup this cost through the admission charged to the event.

If you would like to find out more or wish to order a Golden Jubilee pack(s) then visit our website [www.fistulatrust.org](http://www.fistulatrust.org) or complete the detachable slip and return it by post or fax to the Fund's office.

Please ensure your order is received by the Fund at least two weeks before the date of your planned 'Lighting a Candle' event.

#### *Would you like to volunteer?*

If anyone living in the Sydney metropolitan area would like to help the Fund assemble the Golden Jubilee packs then please contact the office on 02 9449 6725 or by email at [fistulaltd@ozemail.com.au](mailto:fistulaltd@ozemail.com.au).



### **GOLDEN CELEBRATION™**

David Austin® Roses has kindly agreed to donate a portion of the proceeds from the sale of each Golden Celebration™ Rose during the 2009 and 2010 growing seasons to the work of the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital. Some nurseries have agreed to contribute an additional amount for each rose sold.

So look for this beautiful living celebration of the Hamlin Golden Jubilee in your local nursery.

# Awards



In November Dr Catherine Hamlin AC was named as a finalist in the NSW Senior Australian of the Year Award for 2009. The Fund's Executive Officer, James Grainger, attended the announcement ceremony and received the Award Certificate on Dr Hamlin's behalf from the Hon. Carmel Tebbutt, Deputy Premier of New South Wales.



**The Rev Stuart and Billie Abrahams**

The Rev. Stuart Abrahams' outstanding contribution to the work of the Fund in supporting the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital for nearly 14 years was recognised in the recent Australia Day Honours when he was appointed as a Member of the Order of Australia.

The Fund congratulates both Dr Catherine Hamlin AC and the Rev. Stuart Abrahams AM for their recent and very well deserved awards.

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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A Walk to Beautiful DVD - \$30.00

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