

# Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital



Newsletter | September 2007



## FROM DR CATHERINE HAMLIN AC

### DEAR FRIENDS IN AUSTRALIA,

It is time to give you some news of our work at the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital, in which you are so kindly interested and for which you give us such generous support and encouragement as we seek to help our injured mothers. Many of the women who come to the Hospital, of course, have no children because their first labour was obstructed and their baby stillborn. They suffer the awful consequences – a hole or fistula in the bladder and often the rectum as well, and then a life of incontinence, loneliness and sadness.

## SIMEESH ON THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

You may remember Simeesh from the last two newsletters and pictured here soon after she arrived at the Hospital, nursed by Sister Alemtsehai.

Simeesh arrived almost skeletal, bed ridden, with contractures, muscle wasting and tremendous pelvic bone damage. Radiologists all exclaim with horror when viewing her x-rays.

Now you can see this recent photo of Simeesh standing with Sister Alemtsehai who has looked after Simeesh in a very special way and helped her to make an amazing recovery. She has been a model patient always with a smile and never a complaint. Now we have the formidable vaginal injuries to deal with.

Please remember this brave sweet girl in your prayers and all the Hospital staff as we continue to treat her and all the other young women who come to us.



## CELEBRATION AND SADNESS

Thursday 30th August was an exciting day but also a deeply sad one. We were having a party to celebrate the achievements and return of some of our staff. At the same time our beloved Sister Tsedu died. We had been praying for her at the beginning of our party that she would not suffer.

Sister Tsedu was widowed when she was quite young and has worked here at the Hospital for many years. At first she was the sister in charge of night duty, then later working with our pharmacist Sister Metasebiya in the busy pharmacy and pharmacy store. Sister Tsedu developed a rapidly growing cancer which was too advanced for surgery and which did not respond to chemotherapy.

We shall miss her greatly and her faithful work for us and our patients. She has a family of four grown up children, who have been with her in her suffering. We feel her loss acutely as she was greatly loved. We know she is with our God and Father whom she loved and served so faithfully.

Our party was to honour two members of our nursing staff who had both obtained a BSc, in nursing, and our Dr Ambaye, who returned from a year in England with a Masters in Public Health! We also welcomed back Mr Mark and Annette Bennett and their children who had just returned from two months leave in Australia. We also said farewell to Rosemary Burke who has been here for 6 months as a volunteer working at Desta Mender helping to organise micro-enterprise training for the permanent residents.



Dr Hamlin, with Hospital staff and celebratory cake.

## DR AMBAYE RETURNS WITH MASTERS DEGREE

It is a joy to welcome back Dr Ambaye after a year of hard work at Leeds University. Her final treatise was on midwifery, and so we look forward to a lecture soon, filled, I know, with her enthusiasm and new ideas.

She has returned at an opportune time, just as we continue to develop our new midwifery college. It was a joy to welcome her at the party and to once again have her working here with her amazing surgical skill and her sweet love for the patients.



Dr Ambaye

## GENET'S ACCOUNTING DEGREE



Woizero Genet Kifle

Woizero Genet Kifle, our Finance Manager, should have been at our celebrations but she is on a short holiday after obtaining her degree in accounting. We are, indeed, very proud of her for doing this hard work and obtaining this

degree (unbeknown to most of us) and yet faithfully working here, now for over 20 years.

Genet's record of faithful and excellent work is remarkable, and we are proud of her achievement. She has also brought up her three children, now recently all finished schooling, her only daughter (a twin) with very high distinction!

Genet has quite a large staff to supervise. The financial side of our work has greatly expanded with our three outreach centres and a fourth at Harar being constructed. This is due to be finished in about the middle of next year. So our finance department is buzzing with activity.

We were sorry Genet was not at our party, which was a great occasion held in the Bete Misgana (House of Praise). Speeches were made and presents given out to those who had received degrees. As they were all females it was easy to buy attractive jewellery for them! Then there were lots of hugs and cutting of cakes and drinking coffee. The sun shone for the occasion, but as we dispersed a huge rain storm fell from the sky.

We hope that in the next few weeks our trying rainy season will be over – but we rather fear our millennium celebrations on September 11, may be washed out! In this season 44 inches (1,100mm) of rain fall in 3 and a half months – so you can imagine how our lawns and gardens are waterlogged.

### CHANGES IN THE LABORATORY

I should also say a few words about several other staff members. Woizarit Tenagne, who is our head Laboratory Technician, recently left for America to study further laboratory skills at a College in Savannah Georgia, where her brother lives.

We were hoping she might have gone to Australia where she did some previous training in Sydney. But I think having family in America was a big draw for her! We have heard from her and she seems very happy. Our American Trust is helping with some of her expenses for which we are most grateful.



Woizarit Tenagne

We have recently employed another technician to help Ato Gemechu in the Laboratory. We chose this new person from four applicants as he seems suited for the job with good skills and experience.

So now we have Yegedu Makonnen here too in our Laboratory and he will also help set up simple laboratory work in each of our Outreach Centres. This will mean that the Centres will be able to estimate blood haemoglobin, perform blood grouping and cross matching and some urine testing. This will save us using the laboratories of the hospitals adjoining our centres. I know you have heard much in the past about our young Tsehay, who also works in the laboratory during the day and attends school in the evenings. This slight beautiful girl came to us aged 12. She had TB of her bladder and kidneys and gross incontinence of urine as a result. She is now cured and doing great work in her sweet and quite way, collecting samples, keeping the laboratory tidy and clean and generally being a great help to the technicians there.

I also want to mention our wonderful Mamite. She was a tragically injured young country girl who came to us over 40 years ago. She has now become somebody in this Hospital who is looked up to and loved by all. She trains many new nurse

aides, is a skilled worker in the theatre and is even a competent fistula surgeon. She is like a daughter to me. The daughter I never had. She is a treasure, indeed. Greetings from us all and heartfelt thanks for your love and support.



Dr Hamlin with Mamite

*Catherine Hamlin*

Dr Catherine Hamlin

### DR ANDREW BROWNING'S RECENT ACTIVITIES

Stephanie, William and I returned to Australia for two months recently. It was a good opportunity to 'show off' William and he thoroughly enjoyed going to the beach and being spoilt by grandparents and older cousins.

William was very excited to be back and see our guards with whom he loves playing. He is now big enough to play on the street with the boys in the neighbourhood, or 'big boys' as he calls them, playing marbles and soccer.



The staff welcomed us back with a large and touching party along with 65 patients who were waiting to be operated upon.

I recently attended a Conference of the International Continence Society in Holland. I was there to deliver a keynote speech on ongoing incontinence after fistula repair surgery. This gave me the opportunity to speak about the research we have been doing at Bahir Dar into new ways of treating this significant and overlooked fistula problem.

To be invited to present to 2,500 international delegates was a tremendous honour for me and a further recognition of the ground breaking work of the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital.

## HAMLIN FISTULA® RELIEF AND AID FUND

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### MARK AND ANNETTE BENNETT

Recently Mark and Annette spoke at a public meeting at North Sydney following the Annual General Meeting of the Hamlin Fistula® Welfare and Research Limited, which administers the Hamlin Fistula® Relief and Aid Fund here in Australia.



Mark, who is the Chief Executive Officer of the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital, said that many visitors to the Hospital remark on its light, airy, orderly, cleanliness. These features are not normally present in hospitals in developing

countries. Mark paid tribute to Dr Hamlin's professionalism and dedication to ensuring that the highest medical standards are maintained in the way that the Hospital and its Outreach Centres conduct their work.

Mark is putting in place a number of significant management changes which will enhance the administration of the Hospital and its Outreach Centres.

Annette spoke about the new Hamlin Fistula Midwifery College. Construction of the first stage of the College building is being undertaken on land adjacent to Desta Mender. It is anticipated the College will take its first students later this year.

### STUART AND BILLIE ABRAHAMS TAKE A BOW



The public meeting provided the opportunity for David Barnsdall, Deputy Chairman of the Fund, to thank Stuart and Billie Abrahams and present them with gifts in appreciation of their tireless dedication

supporting the Hospital over the last 14 years. The Hospital has benefited enormously from Stuart's work in Australia and his encouragement of the Hospital's overseas partners.

Billie has fully supported Stuart's efforts. She has been a long time friend of Dr Catherine Hamlin and her late husband, having worked with both of them at Crown Street Women's Hospital before the Hamlins first went to Ethiopia in 1959.

During the past year Stuart felt the need to hand over the day to day management of the Fund to someone younger.

In June James Grainger was appointed as the new Executive Officer of the Fund. Stuart will continue to take a keen interest in the work of the Hospital and provide advice and assistance to the Fund as required.

### FUND RAISING ACTIVITIES

The Fund has continued to be well supported over the past several months. Supporters of the Fund have run a whole variety of activities to raise money for the Hospital.

Some recent events have included a walkathon by the staff of Cadbury-Schweppes in Melbourne, a number of dinners organised by ladies of the Toowoomba Community, a 'Shop 'Til You Drop' event organised by the Blue Mountains Branch of Crest, a Trivia Night and Silent Auction by Pancake Productions of Melbourne, a dinner arranged by Kellie Rodwell of Orange, NSW, at which Dr David Knox (Dr Hamlin's nephew) spoke, an art show arranged by Gill Collard of Melbourne, a mufti day collection by NSW Treasury and a weekly 'Dollar Day' collection by Year 11 geography students at Barker College, Hornsby.

To those involved in these efforts and to all who support our Fund in so many ways we are most grateful.

The 'Art for Ethiopia' exhibition held in April was well supported and we thank Sue Loane, Winsome Tong and their helpers for their hard work in making this such a success.

### RAW SILK AND PEARLS

Dr Sarah Thompson recently launched her new book "Raw Silk and Pearls" at Parkers Nursery, Turramurra. All the proceeds from the sale of this book will support the work of the Hospital. It would make an ideal Christmas present.

This is the second book Sarah has published to support the work of the Hospital. It contains over 70 poems "celebrating life".

This beautiful book can be purchased for \$29.95 (including \$5 postage) from Peribo, 58 Beaumont Rd, Mt Ku-ring-gai NSW 2080 or by emailing [info@peribo.com.au](mailto:info@peribo.com.au). phone 02 94570011 for details.



# *A Walk to Beautiful*



This new feature length documentary will premiere in Sydney at an exclusive screening.

Cremorne Orpheum Cinema

Tuesday, 4 December 2007, 6.00pm.

'A Walk to Beautiful' tells the stories of five Ethiopian women who suffer from devastating childbirth injuries and embark on a journey to reclaim their lost dignity.

Rejected by their husbands and ostracised by their communities, these women are left to spend the rest of their lives in loneliness and shame. The trials they endure - and their attempts to rebuild their lives - tell a universal story of hope, courage, and transformation.

Tickets are \$25 and are strictly limited. Please book by phoning 02 9449 6725, or complete the ticket order on the overleaf donation slip or visit our website at [www.fistulatrust.org](http://www.fistulatrust.org) to book and pay online (credit card and online bookings will attract a \$1 fee).

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

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