

# Hamlin Fistula NZ



MARCH 2020



## Zemzem Nureye remembers being a child when she was first married to a man a lot older than herself.

***“I had never seen my husband before we were married. I was not happy about it, because I was only a child and was afraid of married life.”***

From a remote village of northern Ethiopia, two hours away from the nearest electricity, Zemzem recalls being so young she had to be taught to cook by her mother-in-law. It wasn't long before Zemzem was spending all day, every day at home preparing meals and homemaking, along with helping her husband on the farm.

At the age of 14, and after three days of agonising labour in the village, Zemzem was transported to the closest government hospital. After another long day of labour, a now unconscious Zemzem was assisted by medical staff to deliver her baby.

For almost a week, she remained unconscious, and when she finally woke, her mother informed her that her baby had been stillborn.

With agonising shame, she also learned that she had sustained fistula injuries from the birth and was now unable to control urine, nor move her right leg. Because of this, her husband divorced her.

Zemzem was referred to Bahir Dar Hamlin Fistula Centre after six months of suffering in her village; however, she was not fit enough for surgery so was temporarily sent back to her village. For another six months, she recalls her family rallying around her to take care of her, killing several goats and collecting milk to feed her during her recovery.

Her first surgery at Bahir Dar Hamlin Fistula Centre was unsuccessful and Zemzem remembers, ***“My family spent a lot their time and money on me for almost two years, and I blamed myself for being big pressure on them and decided to go to Addis Ababa alone”***.

On her first arrival at our main hospital 12 years ago, Zemzem received her first

surgery at Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital. The fistula was successfully closed but she was still dripping urine. She continued visiting our hospital in Addis for checkups and to collect medication.

***“My first arrival at this hospital has helped me a lot; I've learnt how to manage myself properly and live well with the dripping [of urine]. With the support of you and my family, I recovered well and remarried after five years of the fistula. I then conceived for the second time.”***

After receiving antenatal care at a local clinic, Zemzem returned to the main hospital in Addis for a safe delivery via cesarean section to prevent further risk of fistula injury. At 8 months pregnancy, she gave birth to a baby girl, who sadly passed away within two weeks. This resulted in another divorce.

She moved away from home and began working as a housekeeper in Saudi Arabia, as she felt she had burdened her family for too long. The work was hard and physical, causing her to leak more urine and led to her employer complaining of the smell in her room, as she was soaking the bed at night. She left after four months and returned home. Zemzem recalls urine flooding uncontrollably down her thighs.

After 12 years of suffering with fistula, Zemzem returned to Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital and agreed to have the final diversion surgery. In March 2019, she received the diversion surgery, which totally cured her, and she became dry. Zemzem's mother cried with happiness when she saw her completely cured.

Now, after having been home with her family for a few months, Zemzem is at Desta Mender undergoing rehabilitation with other fistula survivors like her.

***“If I could miraculously speak Emaye's, [Dr. Catherine Hamlin], language, I would not get tired thanking her all day, every day for the transformational impact her work has had on my life. Thank you Emaye and all the staff at Hamlin.”*** - Zemzem

## Meet Two of Our Talented Surgeons

At 39, Dr Biniyam Sirak, fistula surgeon at Yirgalem Hamlin Fistula Centre, is one of our youngest surgeons with a most passionate interest in Hamlin's cause. That may be because he was born inside Desta Mender, which was then an orphanage centre where his father used to work. Now Dr Biniyam is a fistula surgeon, obstetrician and gynaecologist and a fellow in urogynaecology.

***"Hamlin is now a centre of excellence in its holistic and patient-centred care. It is a well-structured ever-growing institution that grabs the interest of whoever, like me, wants to develop further,"*** remarks Biniyam.

***"The selflessness of the founders in establishing such a specialised centre for the marginalised women of my country always remains the inspiration behind prioritising to help these women over my personal comfort. There is nothing that I would love than [to develop] the Hamlins' legacy. No words can explain my gratitude to both of them, and I wish a long and healthy life to Dr Catherine."***

Medical Director of Hamlin, Dr Yeshineh Demerew has devoted 32 of his 55 years to caring for the health of his nation. As a senior fellow in urogynaecology with 22 years' experience as an obstetrician and gynaecologist, he has a wealth of professional experience to inform his role as fistula surgeon at Hamlin's Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital.

Dr Yeshineh is motivated by being able to ***"serve the most needy and neglected women"*** and that his work within



Hamlin is ***"both professionally and morally satisfying."*** In his eight years at Hamlin, he considered himself lucky enough to work with Dr Catherine before she retired:

***"Working with her was a blessing. She made me look beyond surgical techniques and created an outstanding model of holistic, patient-centred care."***



## Dr Catherine's 96<sup>th</sup> Birthday



With her usual wit and grace, Dr Catherine celebrated her 96th birthday surrounded by her adoring staff, friends and family on January 24.

It was a day filled with love and joy, celebrating an extraordinary woman who has fearlessly dedicated her life to the women of Ethiopia.



NOW SCREENING ACROSS THE NATION

# *A Walk to Beautiful*

Join us in viewing this award-winning documentary following the lives of five young Ethiopian women devastated by horrific childbirth injuries.

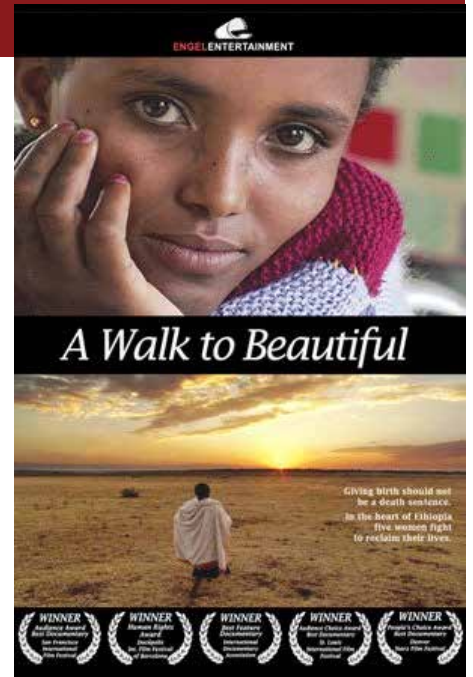
Witness their heart-rending journey as they discover there is help available and set out on a walk to recovery.

Through the tears and the trials of these beautiful women we experience the suffering and the solace each of them receives.

Watch the trailer and at [www.hamlinfistula.org.nz/walktobeautiful](http://www.hamlinfistula.org.nz/walktobeautiful) and view the list of screenings near you.

**Interested in a showing in your hometown?**

Contact us and let's have a chat – [info@hamlinfistula.org.nz](mailto:info@hamlinfistula.org.nz)



## ***A Walk to Beautiful***

***March - Alexandra, Wanaka, Cromawell***

***April - Rangiora, Nelson, Motueka, Blenheim***

***May - Christchurch, Wellington, Auckland***

***June - Invercargill, Dunedin & Gore***

***September - Christchurch***

## ***Glass Slipper Gala***

***- June 20, the Great Hall, Arts Centre, Christchurch***

## ***Highland High Tea for Hamlin @ the Cathedral***

***- August 8, Christchurch***

## ***Hamilton High Tea for Hamlin***

***- September 12, Hamilton***

***Please keep checking at [www.hamlinfistula.org.nz/events](http://www.hamlinfistula.org.nz/events) for new dates and locations***

## **Register your interest now for the The Great Hamlin Ethiopian Tour**

Join us on a life-changing trip to Ethiopia and witness how the dream of eradicating obstetric fistula forever is becoming a reality.

This 10-day tour enables you to an exclusive insider's tour of the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital, Yirgalem Fistula Hospital, Hamlin College of Midwives, Desta Mender and a rural Hamlin Midwifery Clinic. Experience Southern Ethiopia's rich culture – eat traditional food, see stunning wildlife, explore local markets and visit tribal villages.

This trip is available only to 10 people, New Zealand residents only. Each guest is required to raise \$3,000 for Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia and cover their own travel expenses.

Dates: October 2020.

[www.hamlinfistula.org.nz/ethiopiantour.html](http://www.hamlinfistula.org.nz/ethiopiantour.html)

**Is your group fundraising for Hamlin? If your team raises \$3,000, you can nominate one of your members to qualify for the Tour. Don't miss out!**





We exist to ensure the health and dignity of women who have survived a horrendous, and preventable, childbirth injury – obstetric fistula. Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia takes a total care approach: one that seeks to repair, mend and heal all the scars, emotional and physical, that come with this heart-breaking injury.

**Give a Woman Like Zemzem the Gift of Dignity-Restoring Surgery**

Obstetric fistula can mostly be repaired with a single life-changing fistula treatment surgery. For some, this can take no more than an hour.

Your gift of \$700 could fund one standard fistula operation in a Hamlin regional hospital, restoring a woman’s life. You will receive a tax-deductible receipt. Donate today at [www.hamlinfistula.org.nz/donate.html](http://www.hamlinfistula.org.nz/donate.html)



**HELP OUR MIDWIVES ERADICATE FISTULA**

Register online [www.hamlinfistula.org.nz/donate](http://www.hamlinfistula.org.nz/donate) or complete the form and post it back to us:

**I WOULD LIKE TO:**

- Donate a Hamlin General Donation: A/C 06 0817 0264043 00**  
Fistula free pregnancy/labour care for one woman = \$25 | Dignity-restoring fistula surgery = \$700 . . . . . My amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Donate to Administration Expenses of Hamlin Fistula NZ: A/C 06 0817 0264043 02** . . . . . My amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**PERSONAL DETAILS:**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Town/City \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

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Fistula  
NZ**

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