

Hamlin Fistula NZ



JULY 2019



Midwife Hero

Young Hamlin midwife Tisita, at 23, already exhibits the hard work ethic and heroic attitude inspired by her own heroine, Dr Catherine Hamlin.

Four hours and 86km of gut twisting 4-wheel drive travel away from the Hamlin hospital in Harar, Tisita is the sole midwife in a Hamlin midwifery centre in Dogu.

There used to be two other midwives employed by the District Health Board (DHB), but they have moved on and the DHB has not replaced them. We would never guess that she is managing 60-70 births a month on her own – as well as antenatal, postnatal, and family planning visits.

Everything is basic but immaculate, with equipment carefully organised and

blankets neatly folded on the beds. She proudly shows us around the delivery room recently equipped by Hamlin. Drawn on the wall above her head is a heart-felt motto to be shouted loud by any midwife or doctor, **“Zero tolerance for death of mother.”**

Although working in extremely challenging conditions, as most Hamlin midwives do, of sporadic water supply, irregular electricity, remote and isolated work-places and national shortages of drugs and equipment, we hear no complaints from Tisita. She is the sole Orthodox Christian living in and serving a Muslim area. She says she tries hard to be friendly and chat with the locals on the few occasions she leaves the health centre compound. Her eyes light up and her face shines as she tells us of her desire to perform more community outreach: providing health education in the community and encouraging young mothers to use the pregnancy and

delivery services of the midwifery centre. She is bursting at the seams to share her knowledge. Travel out is frustratingly hindered by having no midwife to relieve her and by the distance limitations of travel by foot.

The women that she seeks to serve are women like Zaramsa and Bedria, fistula patients recovering from surgery in the Hamlin Harar Hospital. Each mothers of five, they both carry the heartache of having only two living children. Zaramsa delivered without midwifery care at home in her community; her third stillbirth also left her with the traumatic legacy of fistula. Bedria's story is similar – four deliveries at home with a final stillbirth in a public hospital where she was injured during a caesarean section and left with a fistula.

Your donation helps Tisita, so that she is able to strive for a brighter future for the mothers of Dogu – for childbirth without injury or death.

www.hamlinfistula.org.nz

Christchurch Physio Strengthens Hamlin Physiotherapy Service

Christchurch physiotherapist Ann Johnson (expatriate of the UK), who specialises in working in gynaecology with women who experience incontinence, recently assumed the role of physiotherapy tutor to Hamlin Fistula, after her UK colleague retired from the role. In March she travelled to Addis Ababa for her first ever visit to Hamlin Fistula Hospital.

Ann writes....

“Considering I had first wanted to visit over 25 years ago it didn’t feel real when I arrived, but real it was as we were taken to the on-site guesthouse and started to review our teaching plans. Three doctors who are usually working in the outlying centres had travelled to Addis for a week’s experience in the operating theatres and physiotherapy. Between classroom and practical sessions, they would learn from us about the anatomy of the pelvic floor muscles, how to assess them when examining women and the role of the physiotherapist in strengthening the muscles which are weakened by childbirth.



Both the doctors and physiotherapists were also keen to learn more about prolapse and particularly my experience of fitting pessaries - medical devices to help support prolapses as an alternative to surgery. We discussed when they are appropriate to use as women need to be regularly reviewed medically once they are fitted; if a woman is not able to return to an out-patient clinic it could possibly cause more harm than good.

With the physiotherapists we also discussed ways to manage chronic pain and updated their exercise regime that they use for building women up

whilst they await their surgery.

I had a guided tour of the hospital one morning and was really moved by meeting a lady on the ward who spoke no English or Amharic (no-one in the hospital – staff or patients - could understand her language). This meant everything that happened had to be explained by hand signals.

She was 26 years old and had 5 children. She had become urinary and faecally incontinent due to fistulas. When she arrived, she was in septic shock, very malnourished and appeared to be having psychiatric disturbances. Both her arms and legs were severely contracted, and she was very weak and unable to stand. She had had an MRI of her spine which was normal, but a CT scan of her head showed some changes to her brain. Her treatment was starting with giving her nourishing food, gentle massage to her arms and legs and exercises to get her moving again. I helped my physio colleague to sit her on the edge of the bed for the first time in, I suspect, a long time.

It is amazing to think she must have suffered like this for so long, but now she is in a good place where she will receive all the care she needs to restore her dignity and health.”



Midwives Create Opportunities for Life

Hiqlimay is just a young girl, but at 13, she is already mother to a two-month old baby, safely delivered by Hamlin midwife Tizita in the Hamlin centre at Dogu.

Although married young in the traditional manner, she and her husband are a modern young couple with big plans. In three months time, he will be leaving Hiqlimay for two years to study nursing at university. Wanting to be cautious, they agreed that she should come back to Dogu to see the midwife about

contraception. They don't want her to fall pregnant before he leaves, especially since she will be returning to school for the 7th grade while her mother cares for her baby.

Thanks to Hamlin midwives like Tizita, young mothers have received over 154,000 contraceptive injections in the last 9 months. Family planning enables families like Hiqlimay's to escape poverty through education, ensuring better paid jobs and more secure careers.



60 years / 60,000 Lives

2019 marks 60 years since Dr Reg and Dr Catherine Hamlin first arrived in Addis Ababa on a three-year contract to train midwives. They could not have foreseen what the coming decades would bring, how their hearts would be broken by the suffering of the fistula victims and how they would discover their life's work in treating and preventing fistula. Sixty thousand fistula surgeries later, there is no doubt about the impact the Hamlins have made.



Dr Catherine and her late husband Dr Reg were honoured in the 60th anniversary celebrations at the Addis Ababa Hamlin Fistula Hospital when Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and First Lady Zinash Tayachew attended. This is the first time an acting prime minister has ever visited the hospital and the excitement was palpable. Prime Minister Ahmed bestowed a prestigious gold medallion on Dr Catherine and inaugurated a monument in honour of her and Dr Reg.

PM Ahmed spoke in Dr Catherine's honour:

"Dr Hamlin is a lucky woman who knows what she was born for. Dr Hamlin is a heroine, because she role models humanity beyond ethnicity, colour and sex. She gives priority for humanity and taught us how to be compassionate to those who are suffering. Dr Catherine gave us a lifelong lesson that heroism is saving human life, feeling humanity and standing by the side of the marginalised."

In her usual humble way, Catherine responded, ***"I feel so much love here in this compound today. Thank you all for being with me all these years. I have worked for a long time and committed to helping Ethiopian women who are suffering from fistula. I love you all; I love Ethiopia and its people. I adore helping others and am delighted to see them healthy."***



NZ Government Supports Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia

NZ has made a move to focus on Ethiopia. In an effort by NZ to strengthen diplomatic relations with the African Union, a cross party delegation led by the Speaker, Rt Hon Trevor Mallard and including National MPs Dr Nick Smith and Hon Nicky Wagner, Green MP Gareth Hughes, and Labour MP Angie Warren-Clark, toured Ethiopia, Rwanda and Turkey in April.

During their trip the group spent four days in Ethiopia, including a visit to Hamlin Fistula Rehabilitation Centre at Desta Mender.

The speakers delegation was hosted by New Zealand Ambassador to Ethiopia and the African Union, Mark Ramsden, who facilitated the NZ Embassy Fund contributing \$25,000 to Hamlin earlier this year.

NZ Parliament tweeted:

"The delegation also visited Hamlin Fistula rehabilitation centre, dedicated to the treatment and prevention of childbirth injuries called obstetric fistulas + related training and rehabilitation. New Zealand supports the centre."





Everybody loves tea and cake, which means it is always high time for a High Tea for Hamlin! Join us this September and host a High Tea for Hamlin.

Gather your friends, family and colleagues and host an event this year. Enjoy a day of food, fun and friends whilst helping women suffering with horrific and entirely preventable childbirth injuries.

Your event can be as small or elaborate as you like - if it works for you, it works for us!

By registering today you will be joining a community of people dedicated to eradicating obstetric fistula. Register today at info@hamlinfistula.org.nz

High Tea EVENTS:

Hamilton High Tea for Hamlin
September 7

Christchurch High Tea for Hamlin
August 31

Find out more at
[www.hamlinfistula.org.nz/
events](http://www.hamlinfistula.org.nz/events)

Bequests – Leave a Gift in Your Will

By naming Hamlin Charitable Fistula Hospitals Trust in your Will, you're making a significant contribution to the prevention and treatment of horrendous childbirth injuries.

Bequests to charities are an easy and thoughtful way to leave a lasting tribute to a wonderful cause. A gift in your Will is an enduring contribution to the treatment and prevention of devastating childbirth injuries in Ethiopia.

For more information about how to leave a bequest, visit www.hamlinfistula.org.nz/bequests or email info@hamlinfistula.org.nz



HELP OUR MIDWIVES ERADICATE FISTULA

You can support a midwifery centre for just \$25 a month

On average it costs Hamlin \$20,000 NZD to equip and run a remote maternity centre.

This provides **500** safe births for mothers and babies **2400** antenatal care visits
32,000 HIV screenings **4,100** contraceptive services **and a world without fistula.**

Start your monthly contribution towards ending fistula at
www.hamlinfistula.org.nz/donate



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