



JUNE 2023



# Mulu's joy at being cured after 17 years!

***“Look at me now, I am the happiest woman in the world! I walk around with confidence and dignity. Now I can work and change my life.”*** - Mulu

Obstetric fistula stole Mulu's joy, confidence and relationships for 17 years.

Today, because of you, Mulu is regaining her health, happiness and sense of self, after receiving surgery at Hamlin's Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital.

Mulu was born and raised in Benishangul-Gumuz, a north-western region of Ethiopia. She grew up in a small village and, after discovering she was pregnant, was looking forward to welcoming her newborn baby.

But after two agonising days of obstructed labour, Mulu was taken to the nearest hospital for emergency care. Her beautiful baby was stillborn, and she was left incontinent.

Due to the complexity of her injuries, Mulu underwent multiple surgeries over the years.

Finally, in March last year, Mulu returned to Hamlin's Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital to receive a specialist diversion surgery and her injuries were healed.

“I am completely dry after 17 years! I cannot thank all the staff and those who support their work enough.”- Mulu

Dr Reg and Catherine Hamlin believed that every woman matters. Mulu's treatment over the course of 17 years at Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia embodies that ethos and the Hamlin Model of Care remains the cornerstone for every patient's treatment.

Thanks to your support, women like Mulu are empowered to rebuild their lives. If you haven't already, you can make a donation at [www.hamlinfistula.org.nz/how-you-can-help/donate](http://www.hamlinfistula.org.nz/how-you-can-help/donate)

You can watch Mulu share about her transformation at [www.hamlinfistula.org.nz/mulus-joy-at-being-cured-after-17-years](http://www.hamlinfistula.org.nz/mulus-joy-at-being-cured-after-17-years)



# Christchurch Physiotherapist Mentors Hamlin Team

Her suitcase crammed with donated training shoes (very helpful for women who have developed a footdrop), underwear (to help hold incontinence pads in place when exercising in the gym) and socks for the cold nights, Christchurch's Ann Johnson recently visited Hamlin Fistula Hospital in Addis Ababa.

Ann is an experienced Women's Health Physiotherapist who voluntarily took on the role of physiotherapy mentor for Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia in 2019. She was visiting the UK, ready with a suitcase full of donations for the hospital in March 2020, when the COVID pandemic hit. Unfortunately, Ann had to rush home to New Zealand before lockdown started.

While keeping in contact through Zoom sessions, it has been a long wait to resume visiting. Finally, in February 2023, Ann was able to visit again.

Staff asked Ann's help writing postnatal guidelines for the hospital. Taking World Health Organisation and international guidelines, Ann and Selam, the Lead Physiotherapist, worked to tailor the guidelines to Ethiopia's local context.

Ann also taught the physiotherapy staff about how to assess women for Pelvic Organ Prolapse caused by childbirth - an issue increasingly presenting in women coming to the hospital.



Selam and Ann



Yetem one of the physiotherapy assistants proudly wearing her new shoes with an insert to pad the sole to make her feet more comfortable from her footdrop.

Here in New Zealand many women are initially treated with physiotherapy, a vaginal pessary (a medical device to hold the prolapse in a good position), and surgery if needed. With samples of pessaries donated by Christchurch Women's Hospital, the physiotherapists were able to experience how flexible the pessaries are and discuss the pros and cons of different types.

A hidden epidemic of Pelvic Organ Prolapse in Ethiopia occurs because half of Ethiopian women don't have access to midwifery care in childbirth. Compounded by teenage pregnancy, childhood malnutrition, and carrying heavy loads, prolapse is often left untreated for many years. This painful condition becomes so severe, that for half of these women their uterus hangs into their vagina or outside their bodies.

Like fistula patients, this is traumatic to their physical, mental, social and sexual well-being. Many women are divorced because of their condition - some becoming Nuns.

One 78-year-old Nun, recently treated and cured at Hamlin Fistula, had Pelvic Organ Prolapse for 40 years. Grateful and happy for her healing, she remarked, "If I had this chance 40 years ago, I wouldn't have divorced my beloved husband."

Thanks to volunteers like Ann and our supporters, women with childbirth injuries receive life-changing treatment from Hamlin's expert medical team.



*This old bamboo waiting room in Teticha is in ruins*

# Hamlin Fistula New Zealand Building Project

## Providing Safe Childbirth for Every Woman

For many years, when Drs Reg and Catherine Hamlin sent young women home healed from the Fistula Hospital in Addis, wearing a new dress, the most important instruction the women were given was, "When you get pregnant again, before the birth, start walking to the nearest hospital." The Hamlins' long-term dream was for midwifery training and midwifery centres in remote rural areas. Many of these centres have now been established.

Ethiopia's climate, geography and regional security can be challenging and dangerous at times. Many women in remote villages must navigate mountainous, difficult terrain to reach maternity care.

Every rural Hamlin Midwifery Centre serves a catchment of about 50,000 people in surrounding villages. But some of the villages can be 40-60 km away over rutted dirt roads, often



*The busy Midwifery Centre at Teticha*

inaccessible by bus, or even four-wheel drive or motorbike in rainy season.

For women living in poverty in far-lying villages, transportation to a Hamlin Midwifery Centre during labour can be impossible. They have no choice but to give birth at home without medical care, facing childbirth injuries like obstetric fistula, or stillbirth and even maternal death.

**Over 10,000 Ethiopian women still die every year of maternal causes.**

In Hamlin Midwifery Centres in Gorche and Teticha, only a few of

the hundreds of pregnant women from distant villages make it to birth safely with a Hamlin Midwife.

We can solve this by building maternity waiting rooms. By building rooms where women can come to stay in the weeks before their baby is due, pregnant mothers can access the life-saving care of the Hamlin Midwives.

**We can provide a fistula-free and safe childbirth for every woman.**

We need to raise \$45,000 to build two waiting rooms. One generous couple have already donated \$20,000.

**We still need \$25,000. You can impact the life of a mother and her entire family by donating today.**







# A gift in your Will

## Healing and hope for future generations.

Dr Catherine planned for her hospitals to continue long after she and Reg were gone, and today there are six hospitals and many dedicated staff in place to continue her work. You too can be part of the work transforming the future for thousands of women and their communities through your financial contribution.

**It is now up to us to finish what she started – to ensure future generations of Ethiopian women live free from fistula.**

The number one way to prevent obstetric fistula is to provide the women of Ethiopia with access to midwifery and emergency obstetric services.

Your support will transform the lives of some of the most marginalised women in the world, who suffer needlessly from lack of medical care.

Leaving a gift in your Will (also known as a Bequest) is a thoughtful and easy way to continue your support. It makes the wellbeing of Ethiopia's most vulnerable women part of your life's story.

Not only will your gift help women after your lifetime, there are advantages to you now:

- Your gift costs you nothing today, but transforms women's lives well into the future

- Your loved ones are provided for, and you will make an enduring contribution to the eradication of obstetric fistula
- Your values live on, whether your gift is large or small
- You will become part of a committed community determined to achieve Reg and Catherine's vision of a fistula-free and safe childbirth for every woman in Ethiopia.

**Leaving just 1% of your estate** to Hamlin Fistula New Zealand helps us build a fistula-free Ethiopia, where women can access maternal health care, are confident of a safe pregnancy and birth and are free from incontinence caused by fistula injuries.

**All women deserve to live healthy, dignified and empowered lives.**

All gifts, whether large or small, could make an enormous difference to the lives of Ethiopian women for generations to come. Women like Mulu. In her own words, this is what being fistula free means to her.

"This hospital and the lovely medical team are the only untiring

supporters who helped me stay alive until today." - Mulu

You can find more information on our website [www.hamlinfistula.org.nz/how-you-can-help/gift-in-will](http://www.hamlinfistula.org.nz/how-you-can-help/gift-in-will).

Please let us know when you have finalised your Will so we can thank you and ensure you receive regular updates about the programs your gift will support.

**If you would like more information or would like to talk to someone from Hamlin,** please email [rosemary@hamlinfistula.org.nz](mailto:rosemary@hamlinfistula.org.nz) or call 020 4100 9412 for a confidential chat.



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