

Hamlin
Fistula
NZ



Restore. Empower. Equip.

2024 A YEAR IN REVIEW



Sincere thanks

Dear Supporters,

Last year, your generosity enabled **Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia** to achieve extraordinary milestones, transforming the lives of thousands of women and their communities.

Together, we supported Hamlin's clinical team in performing a record-breaking **4,272 surgeries**, achieving a remarkable **93% obstetric fistula closure rate**. These successes are a direct result of Hamlin's **Project Zero**, which expanded to Didessa Woreda in February 2024. There, Hamlin-trained teams conducted an incredible **24,855 house-to-house surveys**, identifying **156 women** with long-term childbirth injuries. Most of these women have now received treatment, paving the way for a brighter future.

In October, we celebrated the graduation of **15 Bachelor of Science in Midwifery students** and the inaugural cohort of **23 Master's in Clinical Midwifery students** at the Hamlin College of Midwives. These highly skilled midwives are now working in rural communities, helping mothers deliver their babies safely and preventing childbirth injuries such as obstetric fistula.

Rehabilitation efforts also flourished, with **2,237 patients** completing numeracy and literacy education and **1,164** women finishing counselling courses. A record **265** former fistula patients graduated from Hamlin's **Women's Empowerment program**, gaining life-changing vocational skills.

None of this would have been possible without your steadfast support. On behalf of the Board and staff of Hamlin Fistula New Zealand, thank you for your unwavering commitment to this vital work. Together, we are not only restoring lives but also building healthier, stronger communities across Ethiopia.

With every best wish to you and your loved ones for the year ahead.



Joli Wescombe

Joli Wescombe
Chair, Hamlin Fistula NZ



Treatment FY24

4,272 Total surgeries*

93% Obstetric fistula closure rate



Prevention FY24

35,648 Babies birthed safely with a Hamlin midwife

47,356 Pregnant women received antenatal care



Rehabilitation FY24

2,237 Patients completed numeracy and literacy education

1,164 Women completed counselling courses



Project Zero Didessa Woreda Pilot

24,855 House-to-house fistula surveys

156 Women with long-term childbirth injuries found and treated*

* Includes obstetric fistula and prolapse surgeries

Treatment



For most women with obstetric fistula, a simple surgery typically lasting no longer than two hours, repairs their injury and transforms their lives. Your support enables Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia to treat, heal and empower Ethiopian women so they can start their lives anew.

Developed by Dr Catherine Hamlin, the world-renowned surgery techniques used at Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia have been recognised as best practice in global health.

In addition to obstetric fistula surgery, all six Hamlin Hospitals provide a range of gynaecological

treatments to women, including advanced stage pelvic organ prolapse surgery.

In FY24, a record number of 4,272 surgeries* (averaging over 350 surgeries a month) were performed at Hamlin's fistula hospitals. This is almost 20% more surgeries performed than the previous year. The fistula closure rate was 93%.

“When they told me that I am cured of the fistula, I had a joyful moment. Now I am happy and my tears are dried. I feel like I am born again.”

- Ayantu, former fistula patient



Project Zero is laying the foundations for sustainable change

Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia's ground breaking program Project Zero, was launched in late 2023 with the aim of finding every woman living with untreated childbirth injuries, woreda (district) by woreda.

Following the success of the first pilot in Ale Woreda, the second pilot in Didessa Woreda began in February 2024. This woreda comprises 33 kebeles (neighbourhoods) with an estimated total population of 130,079 and 4,513 expected births.

In Didessa Woreda alone, Hamlin-trained teams carried out 24,855 house-to-house surveys and identified 156 women with decades-long childbirth injuries including advanced stage pelvic organ prolapse cases. Most women have now received treatment.

House-to-house surveys are also effective in raising communities' understanding of birth injuries and the importance of antenatal care, maternal health and midwifery care.

Kelemi is affecting change in her community

Mother. Educator. Believer.

These are what Kelemi has become since receiving life-changing surgery at Hamlin's Yirgalem Fistula Hospital. But it was a long journey to get here.

When Kelemi and her husband found out she was pregnant, they were very happy. Like every woman in her remote village, Kelemi planned to give birth at home but after three excruciating days in labour, it was clear something was very wrong. Her family made the long journey to the nearest hospital.

Tragically, Kelemi's baby was stillborn and she sustained an obstetric fistula, leaving her incontinent. When she returned home, Kelemi became very depressed and spent the next seven years suffering in shame and isolation.

Your support finally brought hope and healing to Kelemi.

Kelemi made her way to Hamlin's Yirgalem Fistula Hospital with another woman with obstetric fistula from her village. Kelemi received free life-changing surgery and returned to her community determined to educate women about the importance of visiting a health centre during pregnancy and childbirth.

“The [Hamlin] staff helped me heal psychologically. I live freely in my community. I am happy and stable. Before this I knew nothing about health services. Now I am teaching others about it.” - Kelemi

When Kelemi became pregnant for a second time, she regularly visited her local health centre. She returned to Hamlin's Yirgalem Fistula Hospital for the safe caesarean delivery of her beautiful baby.



“To send women home to experience again a normal life after all they have suffered is the greatest reward we can have and is shared by all who look after fistula patients.” - Dr Catherine Hamlin

Rehabilitation



Without an understanding of obstetric fistula and its causes, survivors are often subject to severe social stigma due to their smell, perceptions of uncleanness, a mistaken assumption of venereal disease and sometimes infertility. Women are trapped in a life of pain, shame and isolation. Nearly all patients at Hamlin's fistula hospitals report psychological issues associated with their condition.

The Hamlin Model of Care is the world's leading approach to treating women with obstetric fistula. This holistic approach considers the whole person with respect and compassion by treating the physical, psychological and emotional effects of obstetric fistula.

Project Zero is the gold standard in holistic fistula treatment

Women with untreated obstetric fistula injuries have often lived in social isolation for many years after being shunned and humiliated by their communities. When they are finally found by the Project Zero team, some women initially refuse treatment as they are afraid and do not believe there is a cure for their 'curse'.

The Project Zero team patiently explains that obstetric fistula is a medical condition sustained during pregnancy and birth due to lack of medical care and that a simple surgery can cure them.

After surgery, women receive counselling, literacy and numeracy classes and vocational and life skills training at Desta Mender to ensure they thrive when they return home.

At Desta Mender, Hamlin's Rehabilitation & Reintegration centre, patients receive customised counselling programs, physiotherapy, literacy and numeracy classes and vocational training.

In FY24, 2,237 patients completed numeracy and literacy education (a 35% increase from FY23) and 1,164 women completed counselling courses (a 48% increase from FY23). Among women attending Desta Mender, 96% were reintegrated back to their communities.

The Women's Empowerment program, a two-month residential vocational training program for

former fistula patients is thriving, with plans to increase participant numbers in 2025. In FY24, 265 women graduated, with over 60% choosing to learn poultry farming skills.

"Throughout the training, I absorbed valuable knowledge. With my newfound confidence and skills, my intention is to raise poultry, establish an apiary and use my pottery skills to supplement my income."

- Kalkidan, Women's Empowerment program graduate



"Because of this injury, they're ashamed and they won't come out and talk about it because it's to do with being incontinent...and they feel ashamed. They feel they're unworthy to be women." - Dr Catherine Hamlin

Adanech - A role model in her community

Adanech sustained a devastating obstetric fistula during the birth of her seventh child, which left her incontinent and in immense physical and emotional pain. Unable to face the judgement of others, Adanech withdrew from her family and friends.

"They [Hamlin staff] helped me triumph over pain and isolation to stand tall as a beacon of hope and resilience." - Adanech

Following transformative fistula surgery at both Hamlin's Yirgalem and Addis Ababa Fistula Hospitals, Adanech attended the Women's Empowerment program where she trained in handicrafts, food preparation, poultry farming and animal husbandry.

Recognising the potential for a sustainable income through livestock, Adanech invested the seed money she'd been given in a cow and a goat and started her own business. She saved her earnings and formed a support network with other women, pooling their resources to achieve their shared vision of a brighter future.



Following fistula repair surgery, Adanech started her own business with the seed money she was given.

Prevention



Hamlin Midwives save the lives of thousands of mothers and babies each year and prevent countless cases of obstetric fistula.

The root cause of fistula is a lack of access to quality maternity care. In Ethiopia, poverty and childhood malnutrition contribute to stunted growth, including smaller pelvic structures, which can lead to obstructed labour. Addressing these challenges by providing skilled maternity care is critical to preventing childbirth injuries.

Project Zero is enhancing maternal healthcare and educating communities

In addition to identifying and treating women with obstetric fistula, Project Zero focuses on increasing awareness of maternal health and birth injuries while supporting communities to access quality maternal care.

Hamlin Midwife Mentors play a pivotal role in this effort, working alongside government-trained midwives stationed in Maternal and Child Health (MCH) units within health centres. Through personalised coaching and updated training, Hamlin mentors equip these midwives with enhanced skills and knowledge. Compassionate, skilled care is vital in building trust among communities that may be unfamiliar with, or distrustful of, formal maternity services. This approach directly contributes to reducing maternal and child morbidity and mortality.

One notable outcome is the success of house-to-house surveys conducted in Didessa Woreda, which have significantly increased antenatal clinic attendance and strengthened community trust in antenatal care and midwife-assisted births.

In FY24, Hamlin Midwives provided safe births for 35,648 babies (a 26% increase from FY23) and 47,356 pregnant women (a 21% increase from FY23) attended their first antenatal appointment at a Hamlin-supported midwifery clinic.

Hamlin Midwives also prescribed contraception to approximately 78,000 women, empowering them to plan their families and reduce the risk of malnutrition.

Since the Hamlin College of Midwives was established in 2007, 271 midwives have graduated and been deployed to underserved areas. Today, 92 Hamlin-supported

rural midwifery clinics are delivering life-saving care in some of Ethiopia's most isolated communities.



“My dream is to achieve Dr. Catherine Hamlin’s goal. As a family midwife, I will try to eradicate obstetric fistula

from our country. I’m going to achieve her dream. That will make me so happy. I feel excited and happy to get this opportunity to serve our people.”

- Hanan, Hamlin Midwife graduate

“If these poor women who come to us had only had access to a trained midwife early in labour they would have recognised something was wrong and been sent to the nearest hospital.” - Dr Catherine Hamlin

First cohort of Masters students celebrates their graduation

The very first cohort of Masters in Clinical Midwifery students graduated from the Hamlin College of Midwives in October 2024. Among them was Aster, who told us how happy she is with the training she received and how grateful she is to people like you, who supported her in her studies.

“I am very happy because my graduation is today. What motivated me to proceed to my Masters degree is that I really love my profession. The Masters learning and teaching process is very excellent.

I would like to thank the supporters and donors to our College from different countries and continents. Your role needs to be continued. God bless you. Thank you.”

- Aster, Masters in Midwifery graduate 2024



Scan the QR code to watch a snippet of the Masters graduation ceremony.



Your support in action

Your incredible support of our Christmas Midwives Appeal will give more women in remote areas of Ethiopia access to skilled, timely, life-saving midwifery care from Hamlin Midwives like new graduate, Hanan. She is pictured to the right at her graduation ceremony in October 2024 with Sister Marit, Vice Dean of the Hamlin College of Midwives.

Hamlin Midwives ensure women give birth to their babies safely and return home happy and healthy with their precious baby to love. Thanks to you, our loyal supporters, every student at the Hamlin College of Midwives is on a full scholarship.

Hanan wrote us a letter to share with you, expressing her gratitude for giving her the opportunity to serve her community. Here is an excerpt. **Scan the QR code** to read it in full.

I don't even know where to begin to express my gratitude for all of the incredible support throughout my studies. Your support was not for me only, it's for all Ethiopian women and mothers.

Your support is helping Hamlin Midwives to achieve their goal and to reach Dr Catherine Hamlin's vision and mission.

I am forever grateful for everything you have done for me and... I will continue to strive for excellence in my work to make you proud.

- Hanan, Hamlin Midwife graduate



A joyful graduation ceremony for new Hamlin Midwives

Fifteen new Hamlin Midwives have been deployed to Hamlin-supported midwifery clinics in remote rural areas of the country, having earned their Bachelor of Science degree in Midwifery from the Hamlin College of Midwives last year.

The graduation ceremony took place in October, celebrating the achievements of 15 dedicated BSc students. The 100% pass rate in the national exit exam is a testament to the excellent training at the College and why it is considered the best midwifery college in Ethiopia.

In a lively and joyful celebration, every student was presented with their degree certificate and a special pin. Awards were presented to students who demonstrated exceptional performance, with special recognition given to those who achieved a high number of safe deliveries before graduating.

There are currently 72 students undertaking their BSc Degree in Midwifery and 52 Masters in Clinical Midwifery post-graduate students at the Hamlin College of Midwives.



Thank you for your kind messages to our patients!

Our patients love receiving your kind messages of love and support. Knowing they have your care and support from across the world gives them strength and courage during their recovery.

Whether you send your messages to us in the post or online when making a donation, each one is delivered and attached to a beautiful Comfort Package. All our patients receive this special gift which marks the start of their healing journey at a Hamlin fistula hospital.



Scan the QR code to watch this lovely short video of patients listening to your messages.



Celebrating our local successes



The Inaugural Hamlin Midwives Awards

This year marked a milestone for our Hamlin Midwives with the launch of the Hamlin Midwives Awards, an initiative introduced by our Chairwoman, Joli Wescombe. From an outstanding pool of applicants, three exceptional young midwives were recognised: Emebet Zigie for Innovation and Problem-Solving, Masresha Kaleb for Community Mobilisation, and Sintayehu Lake for Clinical Excellence.

These remarkable women, each in their first 1-2 years of midwifery practice, have overcome significant challenges, including working in remote locations, resource limitations, and language barriers. Despite these obstacles, they successfully engaged their communities and increased the number of births at midwifery clinics. Their achievements include:

Building Maternity Accommodation Rooms: Collaborating with local health authorities, they provided housing for expectant mothers from remote villages, enabling access to midwifery care without the need for long-distance travel during labour.

Enhancing Detection of Pregnancy Complications: Increasing access to ultrasound services ensured timely identification and management of complications.

Community Education: Working with community leaders, Health Extension Workers, and local members, they established monthly education forums for pregnant women and their families. These included sessions specifically for men to raise awareness of maternal health needs.

Masresha beautifully summarised the heart of their work, sharing:

“Being human is enough to help people. The community has a lot to share if we have good listening skills and habits. All people need better things in life if there is a leader who shows the way... I made the [health centre] director and other health professionals believe that being a woman never hinders me from achieving what I dream. It is only a matter of self-motivation and vision. Based on this, I became a role model for the health centre and the community.”

As part of their recognition, each midwife received US\$1,500 to invest in their maternity clinic and a laptop—a valuable tool for their ongoing education, worth more than their annual salary.

Congratulations to Emebet, Masresha, and Sintayehu—you inspire us all with your dedication and achievements. We are immensely proud of you!

Your generosity shines!

Beyond financially supporting our contributions to treatment, rehabilitation, and prevention strategies, your kindness has provided:

150 **Comfort Packages** for women arriving at one of Hamlin's hospitals for treatment.

1,275 **Knitted woollen baby hats** for Ethiopian newborns—keeping babies warm and encouraging mothers to give birth safely with a Hamlin Midwife.

Welcoming Jayne Rattray



In April, Jayne joined Hamlin Fistula NZ as our Fundraising Manager, bringing extensive

expertise in marketing, fundraising, event management, and graphic design. As our sole full-time staff member, Jayne is the driving force behind everything we do.

In just a few months, she has made remarkable progress, including a successful North Island Speaking Tour and organising our Christchurch High Tea, featuring the mesmerising music of Fiona Pears and Dan Robertson. Guests enjoyed delicious treats, Ethiopian gifts, and updates from Ethiopia—all in support of Hamlin's life-changing work. Together, these events welcomed over 250 new supporters to our cause.

Jayne has also launched the heart-warming Hats for Hamlin initiative and led our Christmas Midwives Appeal, raising over \$50,000 to train, equip and deploy midwives in Ethiopia.

She has loved getting to know our wonderful donors and is deeply committed to Hamlin's mission to treat and prevent obstetric fistula.

We are truly grateful for the passion, dedication, and creativity she brings to our organisation and look forward to continuing this journey with her at the helm of our fundraising efforts.

Ways you can support us in the year ahead

Become a *regular* giver

Becoming a regular giver is one of the most powerful ways to transform lives in Ethiopia.

Your ongoing support helps us deliver world-class care to women living with fistula and prevent new injuries through improved access to maternity healthcare.

For just \$4.38 a day, you can provide a life-changing surgery to a woman suffering from the trauma of obstetric fistula.

 hamlinfistula.org.nz/donate

Partner with us

Join us in spreading the word about the urgent need for fistula surgery and improved maternity care across Ethiopia.

You can make an impact by sharing Hamlin's story with your friends and family – post on social media, encourage others to join our email list, host a High Tea, or gift Catherine's inspiring autobiography, *The Hospital by the River*.

We're also available to speak at workplace or community events and would gladly accept items or vouchers to auction or raffle at future fundraisers.

 Email: info@hamlinfistula.org.nz

Barefoot for Hamlin

Imagine walking barefoot for days across rugged terrain, seeking the medical care you desperately need. For many Ethiopian women with fistula, this is their reality.

Join a Barefoot for Hamlin walk to show your solidarity with these courageous women and fundraise for their healing journey.

Choose your challenge—walk barefoot in the park, along a beach, run a city trail, or even go barefoot at work. Every step you take helps change lives.

Create a personalised fundraising page and invite friends and family to support your efforts.

 hamlinfistula.org.nz/barefoot

High Tea for Hamlin

Join us for High Tea in Christchurch or host your own event anywhere in New Zealand.

When you take part, you're not just enjoying delicious treats—you're helping raise hope and awareness.

Whether you prefer an intimate gathering or a grand affair, your High Tea can be personalised to suit any location—home, school, work, church, or a community center. Your event can make a meaningful impact.

 hamlinfistula.org.nz/high-tea

Knit Hats for Hamlin

Join us in knitting woolen baby hats for newborns. Your handmade creations will offer warmth and comfort to babies born in rural areas where cold nights are common and resources are scarce.

A warm hat can be lifesaving for a vulnerable newborn. And in communities where women traditionally birth at home without medical care, gifting a baby hat encourages mothers to give birth safely with a Hamlin midwife.

For many of these babies, this will be their only piece of clothing – an essential item that provides warmth and symbolises the love and care from people like you, thousands of miles away.

 hamlinfistula.org.nz/hats

Leave a lasting *legacy*

Drs Reg and Catherine Hamlin dedicated their lives to eradicating obstetric fistula in Ethiopia, offering love, hope, and the chance for women to reclaim their lives.

Planning to leave a gift in your Will is a meaningful way to ensure their vision lives on. It allows Ethiopia's most vulnerable women to be part of your life's story.

Your gift provides hope for the future while benefiting you today:

- It costs you nothing now but transforms lives for years to come
- It ensures your loved ones are provided for while advancing the fight against fistula
- It allows your values to endure, no matter the size of your gift.

 hamlinfistula.org.nz/gift-in-will

Visit Ethiopia with us

Have you ever thought about visiting the hospital by the river?

Why not join us for the adventure of a lifetime to Ethiopia?

Our 13-day small group trips are the perfect way to explore this extraordinary country, with a Hamlin representative and an expert local tour guide ensuring you enjoy the best possible travel experience.



What you can look forward to:

- Visits to the world-renowned Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital, the Hamlin College of Midwives, Desta Mender rehabilitation and reintegration centre, Hamlin's Yirgalem regional fistula hospital and two rural Hamlin-supported midwifery clinics.
- Exploring the cultural and scenic highlights of southern Ethiopia including the traditional lifestyles of various tribal groups in the Omo Valley, spectacular Ethiopian scenery and wildlife at Mago National Park and the twin lakes of Abiata and Shalla.
- Embracing the warmth and hospitality of the Ethiopian people and tasting traditional cuisine in a variety of heart-warming dishes.
- Making life-long friends with like-minded travellers, all committed to making a difference.

Tour Dates

3-15 Mar 2025 | 3-15 Mar 2026
4-16 Nov 2025 | 3-15 Nov 2026

Visit www.hamlinfistula.org.nz/adventure to book or find out more. Places do fill up fast so get in quick to secure your spot!



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