



2023
July

Welcome to your July newsletter

As I step down as CEO of Catherine Hamlin Fistula Foundation this month, I am reflecting on my time with the Foundation and the many, many life-changing encounters I have had at Hamlin. As is often the case - it is the individual people that foster the greatest and deepest memories.

When Dr Catherine Hamlin passed away in early 2020, it was a seismic moment which saw an extraordinary response from many people around the world, including our staff, our Board, the surgeons and staff in Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia's hospitals, clinics and the College, our volunteers and you, our wonderful supporters.



On her passing, everyone responded magnificently. This was a tribute to the work Catherine and Reg started and we all renewed our resolve to achieve Catherine's goal of a world without fistula.

One life-transforming procedure at a time, Catherine created an extraordinary legacy of hope and love.

I will forever be a supporter and I will stay involved with the Foundation in other ways. Once you have seen the plight and resilience of Hamlin's patients, it is impossible to forget them.

I am delighted that CHFF's Chair, Julie White, will lead the organisation moving forward. Julie has a long history with Hamlin, strong knowledge of our programs and warm relationships with the team in Ethiopia and Hamlin's partners around the world. The Foundation and Catherine's legacy could not be in better hands.

Hamlin's Project Zero launched earlier this year and will eradicate obstetric fistula. This groundbreaking new program is the culmination of more than 60 years' work in patient identification and prevention. It is Hamlin's road map for eradication of fistula in Ethiopia just as Catherine planned.

I hope you enjoy reading more about Project Zero and the incredible impact of your support in this newsletter.

Thank you to each and every one of you, particularly our wonderful regular givers, for everything you've done to support Hamlin during my time as CEO of this wonderful organisation.

Carolyn Hardy,
CEO, Catherine Hamlin Fistula Foundation



[click here to read the full letter](#)

Helping find, heal and empower women

Why Mark and Liz chose to become Hamlin regular givers

"I'm Mark. My wife, Liz and I live in Caves Beach near Lake Macquarie and have four children.

Liz is a registered nurse and I own and run a self-storage business. We both attend the local Baptist church in Caves Beach, which also has a gym where I volunteer as a handyman.

While I was at the gym, I picked up a book from a small library in the foyer. I was immediately captivated by the story of Reg and Catherine Hamlin and this book, *The Hospital by the River*, had a lasting and profound impact on my life.

I had previously been on two trips to Kenya so I was intrigued as the book centred on Africa. The plight of the women [with obstetric fistula] in Ethiopia just tore at my soul.

As a father of three girls (and a son), I was appalled at the abysmal medical conditions these women faced. To be outcasts as well just seemed too cruel.

By becoming Hamlin Regular Givers, Liz and I can support Hamlin's important ongoing work. It seems such a great sustainable model which will carry on into the future.

Patients stay in such a caring environment, surrounded by gardens, while they are treated.



Mark and Liz Jemmett,
Hamlin regular givers

Some continue to live at Desta Mender (Hamlin's rehabilitation centre) if they are unable to return to their home.

I can only imagine how women must feel after travelling often vast distances to arrive at the hospital. It must be like coming across an oasis in a desert.

To have their health and dignity restored, their story validated and hopefully return to their family and village is just amazing.

Liz and I look forward to visiting the hospital in the not too distant future.

In the meantime, we are proud to be a part of the inspirational work started by Reg and Catherine Hamlin in Ethiopia."

Thank you to all our generous Hamlin Regular Givers

By choosing to donate a set amount each month, you have joined a community of compassionate people who are helping to find, heal and empower women every day.

We couldn't reach these women without you.



Will you join us?

Monthly giving is the most effective way to donate. It helps us plan ahead and find, treat and empower women suffering from obstetric fistula injuries.

Visit hamlin.org.au/regulargiving

A new life for prolapse patient, Selenat



Selenat* lives in a poor remote village in Southern Ethiopia where subsistence farming is the only source of income for her family.

Selenat's prolapse injury occurred during the home birth of her fourth child. She endured her injury for 25 long years, resulting in advanced stage pelvic organ prolapse (POP). It ruined Selenat's marriage and she could not work. She stayed home in pain and stress.

In April last year, Selenat was found by a Hamlin patient identification officer and taken to Hamlin's Yirgalem fistula hospital for surgery. After 25 years, Selenat is healed and free from suffering.

Thanks to your support, Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia provides surgery for a range of gynaecological conditions in addition to obstetric fistula repair, including advanced stage pelvic organ prolapse.

Selenat says, "I never thought that I could get cured. Thanks to everyone here I am now a free woman ready to face life challenges by myself. I wish I had known you earlier but still feel so happy and I am ready to begin life again. Thank you."

Meet Hanna, Project Zero Team Leader

Hanna Tesfaye is the Team Leader for the pilot of Hamlin's ambitious new program, Project Zero in Ale Woreda (district). She trained as a midwife at the Hamlin College of Midwives and has a Master's degree in public health.

Hanna met Dr Catherine Hamlin at the College and shares her vision of eradicating obstetric fistula in Ethiopia. Hanna's team is raising awareness of fistula in the community and finding women with historic fistula injuries so they can receive treatment and immediate care.

"If a woman is free from obstetric fistula, she's a backbone of the family. She's a woman. She's a sister, a mother and a wife. The family will be productive and future generations will be productive." - Hanna

Hanna's team is also preventing new fistula cases by improving the quality of and access to maternal healthcare across Ale Woreda.



Wrapped with Love

A big shout out to the hundreds of wonderful Australian volunteers who have participated in our knitting project - and to Australian charity, Wrapped with Love.

Thanks to you, 260 Hamlin comfort blankets are on their way to Ethiopia from Australia. These iconic blankets will soon be wrapped around the shoulders of women arriving at Hamlin fistula hospitals as they await life-changing surgery to restore their lives and their dignity.



Hamlin midwives are saving more lives through Project Zero

Never have Hamlin midwives played a more pivotal role in eradicating obstetric fistula and improving maternal healthcare across Ethiopia.

Project Zero includes expansion of the Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia Prevention program. Our goal is to establish a midwifery clinic in every woreda (district), staffed by Hamlin midwives who have trained at the Hamlin College of Midwives.

A comprehensive antenatal program is also being introduced to ensure all pregnant women deliver safely and new cases of obstetric fistula are prevented.

A new app called Maternal Health Improvement Tool (M-HIT) is being used by Hamlin midwives to monitor pregnant women and escalate care for those at risk.

Congratulations to graduates of the Women's Empowerment Program!

We're delighted that the January intake of 49 trainees recently graduated from Hamlin's Women's Empowerment Program!

Congratulations to all graduates!

Thank you to all those who donated to the Women's Empowerment Program appeal earlier this year. You're giving these women the opportunity to learn skills that will allow them to return to their communities with hope, choices and independence.

29 women trained in poultry farming

10 women trained in food processing

10 women trained in nursery (vegetable) management

ALL women learnt additional pottery & craft skills

ALL women received counselling & mindset training

ALL women passed their Centre Of Competency exam

Barbara with Catherine



Dr. Barbara Kwast's visit to HFE

Dr Barbara Kwast, one of Catherine's dearest friends and colleagues, visited Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia's Addis Ababa Hospital recently.

From The Netherlands, Barbara remains a pioneer of the global maternal health movement.

An epidemiologist, midwife and educator, her research on the

causes of maternal deaths has contributed to reducing the maternal mortality rates around the world.

Barbara was instrumental in the establishment of the Hamlin College of Midwives and has made an extraordinary impact on maternal health in Ethiopia.

Thank you Barbara!

Your support in action

“After I came to this hospital I got treated and cured. Thank you for taking care of me.”
– Ayinalem



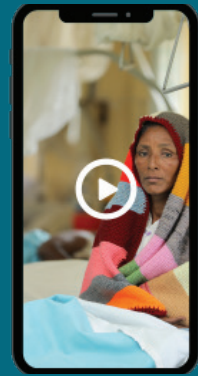
Your support has freed Ayinalem from her fistula injury and a life of misery and solitude.

After months of hiding alone and in shame with her fistula injury, Ayinalem heard a Project Zero radio announcement urging her and other women with fistula to come to Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia for treatment.

Ayinalem's life was transformed by a simple fistula repair surgery at Hamlin's Metu fistula hospital. Up to 31,000 Ethiopian women like Ayinalem still live with the pain and indignity of an untreated obstetric fistula injury - and up to 1,000 new cases occur each year.

Our mission is to make these numbers ZERO. With your support, we are confident it will be achieved.

Watch this lovely video of Ayinalem's story



Fana, Aster, Mengesha and Abebe

These brave women are the first four patients to be found and treated for their fistula injuries through Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia's Project Zero.

Their smiles speak volumes. Years of suffering are finally over and they are looking forward to new lives with dignity, connection and possibility. Fana, Aster, Mengesha and Abebe encapsulate what Project Zero is all about. **No more suffering. No more pain. No more isolation and shame.**

If you haven't already, you can make a donation at hamlin.org.au/appeal to help find, treat and empower more women.

“We have to eradicate Ethiopia of this awful thing that's happening to women: suffering, untold suffering, in the countryside. I leave this with you to do in the future, to carry on.” – Dr Catherine Hamlin

The barefoot champion is back!

Jamie Thomson completed his first barefoot walk in North Wales, UK in May last year – and raised over \$5,000 for Catherine Hamlin Fistula Foundation! It was such a positive experience he decided to do it again!

In May this year, Jamie and his parents and sister challenged themselves to walk a 50km section of the Shropshire Way, near where Jamie grew up.

Jamie says, “I trained for about three months, so that my feet would be up to the challenge. At first, the weather did not look promising but we ended up having plenty of sunshine.

The path took us through the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty – a well-deserved name.

I read *Healing Lives* by Sue Williams during the walk, which kept me motivated and focused. It’s a great book to learn about obstetric fistula in Ethiopia, the great work pioneered by the Hamlins and the amazing ongoing care provided by Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia.

I completed 60km barefoot over 6 days and my feet were still in good shape at the end! Most importantly, I raised over



\$7,000 for Hamlin, which I’m so pleased about.”

Congratulations and thank you, Jamie. We can’t wait to see what you do next!

Rug up this winter

The Hamlin shop has beautiful throws, wraps, capes and shawls to keep you warm, comfortable and cosy this winter. You will also find beanies, blankets, homewares, bags, jewellery and more!



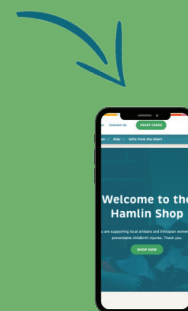
The Almaz Wrap: Gold
(also in black, pink, mint)

Kaba Cape
(also in stone)



Mechot Throw: Navy
(also in bronze, ivory)

Shop here!
store.hamlin.org.au



Thank You!

You, our wonderful supporters and donors, give women with fistula in Ethiopia the love, hope and opportunity they need to regain their lives. Thank you.

Together, we will eradicate fistula. Forever.



Catherine Hamlin Fistula Foundation

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Photos by Mary F. Calvert, Martha Tadesse, Joni Kabana, Amber Hooper & Sabahar

Patient names have been changed to protect the identities of those we help.