



2023  
September

What an incredible honour and privilege it is for me to be now working much more closely with the team at Catherine Hamlin Fistula Foundation in the new role of Executive Chair. The energy, passion and commitment to supporting the work that Catherine and Reg Hamlin started in Ethiopia over 60 years ago and which continues today through Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia is palpable from staff, volunteers and supporters.

As this newsletter goes to press, our very successful Giving Day has just finished. Thank you so much to everyone, especially our generous matching donors, who supported our *Raise2Restore* Giving Day. Your incredible support will help provide surgery to the backlog of women in the Tigray region who were not able to receive treatment for their fistula injuries during the civil war.



While the eradication of fistula in Ethiopia once seemed impossible, it is now becoming a reality, thanks to generous supporters like you who are determined to see Catherine's vision come true. As you will read further on, the pilot of Project Zero progresses in Ale Woreda (district) in south-western Ethiopia.

The goal of this program is to find and treat every woman in Ethiopia living with a childbirth injury and to prevent new injuries from occurring. The pilot is already making inroads and 53 women from just one woreda have had their lives and dignity restored through life-changing surgery.

In other exciting news, the Hamlin College of Midwives is undergoing a major expansion to accommodate the increasing number of midwifery students at the College. Midwives are absolutely pivotal to the success of Project Zero and the eradication of fistula.

For those of you who would like to see first-hand the work of Hamlin and also experience the wonders of Ethiopia, bookings are now open for the Hamlin Ethiopian Adventure in November 2024. Our March trip sold out quickly so don't miss out on this incredible trip of a lifetime, whilst supporting the work of Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia.

We hope you will continue on this journey with us until every woman in Ethiopia can give birth safely and no woman suffers the indignity of a terrible childbirth injury. Thank you for your ongoing support of Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia.

**Julie White**  
**Executive Chair, Catherine Hamlin Fistula Foundation**

P.S. Why not start your Christmas shopping early? The Hamlin Shop has a wide range of beautiful, ethically made gifts.



# Your Support in Action

## Project Zero – the road map to end fistula

Hamlin's Project Zero Team: (Back L-R) Simegn Sori, Ayantu Fikadu, Hanna Tesfaye, Tirunesh Dibisa (Front L-R) Takele Biratu and Melkamu Tesfaye



The pilot of Project Zero, Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia's new program to eradicate fistula woreda (district) by woreda, is progressing well. The local community is enthusiastic and committed and the pilot is on track to be completed in October.

Your amazing support of our Tax appeal is making it possible to roll out this unique program to other woredas, accelerating the eradication of fistula across the country.

The Project Zero team continues to:

- Go house-to-house to find women living with obstetric fistula
- Provide mentoring to midwives and nurses at local health centres to improve maternal healthcare services
- Train local health and community workers in identifying fistula and referring women for treatment
- Spread awareness of fistula and its treatment by visiting major marketplaces, community gatherings and schools
- Use the new M-HIT app (Maternal Health Improvement Tool) to monitor pregnant women and escalate care for those at risk.

## Help finally arrives for Aster

**“When I arrived back home I was ecstatic and entered the house kneeling and shouting with joy.” – Aster**

Half a century ago, Aster gave birth to a stillborn baby boy. With no access to medical care her long, obstructed labour resulted in an obstetric fistula, a condition she has lived with ever since.

Despite her injury and incontinence, Aster continued to care for her husband and her home. She was never able to fall pregnant again.

Earlier this year, help finally arrived for Aster. Hamlin's Project Zero team came to her village looking for women with untreated fistula injuries. Aster and her husband were

sceptical. Her husband says, “I believed her condition to be incurable at this old age and I didn't want her to have empty hope.”

They reluctantly visited Hamlin's Metu Fistula Hospital, where she received loving care and treatment for her injury. She has returned home feeling like a new person.

“They were like a family, very empathic. When I arrived back home I was ecstatic and entered the house kneeling and shouting with joy. I am very grateful. Now I am leading a happy life!” says Aster.



Watch  
Aster's story  
←

# Thanks to YOU, Hamlin's Giving Day was a huge success!

**RAISE<sup>2</sup>**  
**RESTORE**



**"The motherly care I am receiving has turned my feelings into happiness and hopefulness. Now I am on my way to cure and hoping to join my children happily." – Selam**

Thank you to all of YOU who supported Catherine Hamlin Fistula Foundation's second **Raise2Restore Giving Day** on Thursday 31st August.

**We raised in excess of \$625,000** thanks to the generous group of donors who matched your donations on the day.

Your incredible support will help provide life-changing fistula surgery to the backlog of women in the Tigray region of Ethiopia. During the civil

war, Hamlin's Mekele Fistula Hospital was closed or forced to provide care at a severely reduced rate.

The funds have enabled us to start purchasing the medical equipment and medication needed to open a second operating room. This means **double the number of women can be treated** and returned to their communities, restored.

**From everyone at Team Hamlin, thank you for your support.**

## Meet Dr Melaku Abreha



Dr Melaku is the Medical Director at Hamlin's regional Mekele Fistula Hospital in the Tigray region of Ethiopia.

He is a senior obstetrician-gynaecologist and urogynaecologist and has been a valued member of Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia's Clinical Team for almost 20 years.

Dr Melaku first met Dr Catherine Hamlin in 2001 while he was undertaking his internship at Hamlin's Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital.

**"She [Catherine] has been a role model for my career. She and her late husband, Dr Reg were champions for holistic fistula treatment, not only for Ethiopia but for the rest of the world as well. They inspired me."**

Dr Melaku chose to work at Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia because, "You serve your patients with worry [concern] and apply every available solution to cure them. We help the poorest of poor on the planet. We are making a difference."

## Thank you for your kind messages of support

Thank you for taking the time to write your kind messages to patients arriving at a Hamlin hospital for treatment. Each card is now attached to a Comfort Package so patients know they have your care and support from the other side of the world.





# It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas . . .

Give a gift that gives back this Christmas. Buy fairtrade or ethically made presents for friends and family, knowing you are helping to restore the lives of brave, courageous women impacted by obstetric fistula.

All proceeds from the Hamlin Shop support Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia's treatment for women

suffering from obstetric fistula injuries. Your purchase also supports the independent makers earning a living through their craft.

There's a great range of summer products and some special offers coming, just in time for Christmas. **All orders over \$90 receive free shipping Australia wide.**

## Summertime Favourites



\$69

Abay Beach Towel in Blush (3 colours)



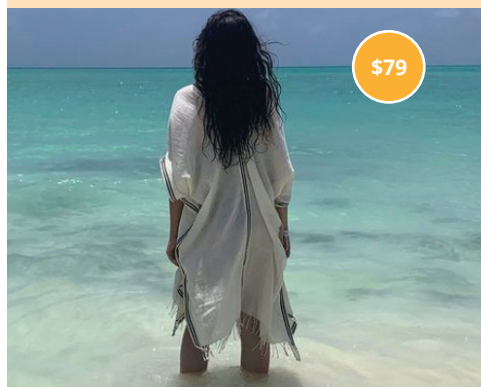
\$69

Takeze Beach Towel (adult size in 2 colours)



\$99

Market Basket & Abay Beach Towel (Tangerine)



\$79

Petra Kaftan (black trim)



\$49

Awassa Beach Poncho (comes in 3 colours)



\$59

Sisal Bag in Sand (Natural also available)

## Christmas Decorations



\$25

Red Christmas Reindeer (also comes in white)



\$25

Christmas Candles (set of 6)



\$9

Christmas African Medallion in Red

Supporting fairtrade artisans and Ethiopian women with obstetric fistula.



## Gifts under \$30



Wendy Sharpe Tea Towel



Healing Lives



Selome Earrings (Silver and Brass)

## Gifts under \$60



Kazuri Necklace (14 different colours)



Mariam Scarf in Blush



Kitege Market Basket with Leather Trim

## Gifts under \$100



Queen Taitu Shawl (comes in 2 colours)



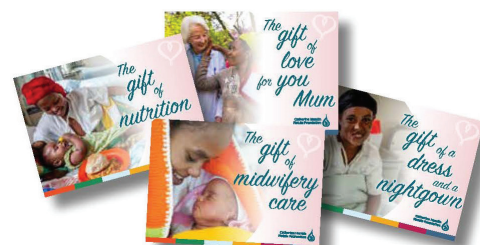
Mariam Scarf (Blush) & Zanele Necklace (Pink & Orange) Bundle



Tizita Necklace

## Gifts from the Heart

Every Gift from the Heart card represents a unique gift to an Ethiopian woman. We have 10 Gift from the Heart cards to choose from, and they come in two types - a Physical Card and a Printable Card. You can choose to have your card sent to you, or someone special. Our Gift from the Heart cards start at \$20 so there's something for every budget. Every card is tax-deductible with 100% of the proceeds supporting our work.



Shop online at [store.hamlin.org.au](http://store.hamlin.org.au) or call us on 02 9440 7001



# A gift in your Will helps shape a fistula-free future

**“My vision is to eradicate obstetric fistula from Ethiopia. I won’t achieve this in my lifetime, but you can in yours.” – Dr Catherine Hamlin**

Thousands of Ethiopian women’s lives are robbed by the devastating childbirth injury, obstetric fistula. Dr Catherine Hamlin devoted her life to giving women their lives back, ending their suffering and giving them health, hope and opportunity.

Now it’s our turn to continue Catherine’s important work. Long-term supporter, Annalisa (pictured right), has included a gift to Hamlin in her Will.

“I strongly empathise with women suffering from horrific injuries related to obstructed labour that leave them incontinent, shunned and living in isolation and poverty. It is not their fault they lose their babies and get injured during

childbirth. They need to be fully supported.

The first time I heard about Catherine Hamlin and obstetric fistula was through her book, *The Hospital by the River*. Catherine and her husband, Reg sacrificed much and were inspirational for dedicating their lives to eradicate obstetric fistula from Ethiopia.

I went on the 16-day Hamlin Ethiopian Adventure in November 2015. It is heart-warming and uplifting to be able to help women recover from ill health and misery to live productive lives amongst family and community. I feel privileged to help prevent obstructed births through Hamlin’s cohorts of midwives,



who are bringing about long-term change.

We should honour Catherine and Reg’s legacy by continuing their work and building bridges between our two countries.”

For more information about leaving a gift in your Will, call us on **02 9440 7001** or visit **[hamlin.org.au/wills](http://hamlin.org.au/wills)**.

## Why support Hamlin in your Will?



Your gift costs you nothing today, but transforms women’s lives tomorrow.



Provide for your loved ones and make an enduring contribution to the eradication of obstetric fistula.



Become part of a committed community determined to eradicate obstetric fistula in Ethiopia.



Ensure your values live on, whether your gift is large or small.

## Give in memory of your loved one

Honour the memory of your loved one by creating a lasting tribute and helping women in Ethiopia living with obstetric fistula:

**Etch a memory\*:** Etch the name of your loved one on an In Loving Memory monument at Hamlin’s Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital, the Hamlin College of Midwives and Desta Mender.

**Make a donation in memory:** Make a monthly or annual gift to mark a loved one’s birthday or special event.

**Create a Tribute page:** Leave messages of love and support, share photos and leave donations in memory of someone special.

**Donate ‘Gifts in Memory’:** In lieu of flowers, ask friends and family to make a donation to help women living with obstetric fistula in Ethiopia.

To find out more, visit **[hamlin.org.au/in-memory](http://hamlin.org.au/in-memory)** or call **02 9440 7001**.

*\*a minimum donation amount applies*



# Hamlin Midwives are key to Project Zero's success

"I am Mahilet Tegegn. I am a married Mum of two children, who I love caring for.

I joined Project Zero in March 2023 as a mentor to the midwives at health centres. I also give awareness to the community about obstetric fistula. I am highly ambitious to eradicate fistula and improve maternal health services.

I studied midwifery at the Hamlin College of Midwives. I am very impressed by Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia for providing trained midwives at remote health centres and their

commitment to eradicate fistula from Ethiopia.

Women face a lack of quality service, poor infrastructure and a shortage of well-trained



health professionals. My favourite part about my role is sharing my experience, knowledge and skill with the midwives, following up and giving them feedback.

I feel that they [Drs Catherine and Reg Hamlin] are loved by Ethiopian mothers and the legacy they left for us is being compassionate for mothers suffering from fistula and fistula-related injuries.

I will be happy and satisfied when fistula is eradicated and I expect to have fistula-free generations in the future."

## Celebrate International Coffee Day with us!

Join us on Sunday 1 October to celebrate International Coffee Day. Did you know coffee is a gift from Ethiopia?

Legend has it that, in the 9th century, goat herders noticed that their goats were full of energy after eating berries from the coffee plants. After giving it a try themselves, the legendary 'pick me up' was born!

Today, coffee ceremonies form an integral part of social and cultural life in Ethiopia. An invite is an incredible mark of respect and friendship. Girls are taught from a very young age how to perform the intricate ceremony

and share it with family, friends, neighbours and visitors.

Drink up in the knowledge that, as the Ethiopians would say, "Buna dabo naw!" ("Coffee is our bread!")



## Exciting expansion of the Hamlin College of Midwives

The Hamlin College of Midwives is undergoing a major expansion to include a new lecture hall, laboratory, classrooms, library, cafe and dormitory, supported by one of Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia's generous partners.

These new spaces are urgently needed to cater for the increasing numbers of BSc and MSc midwifery students attending the College.



The grounds being prepared for the new two-storey library and a 98-bed student dormitory.



# Put the FUN in fundraising!



Why not try something a little different to raise funds for Hamlin? Two of our supporters have recently chosen to hold a **Drag Bingo** event as a fundraiser and, as you can see from these photos, had lots of fun doing it!

Thanks to our amazing fundraisers, more Ethiopian women are getting the love and care they deserve. Whether you hold a bake sale, get sponsored to do a run or fundraise in lieu of gifts on your birthday, there are many ways to make an impact and empower women.

Get started today! Visit [fundraising.hamlin.org.au](https://fundraising.hamlin.org.au).



## November 2024 Hamlin Ethiopian Adventure

*Book your spot!*

Bookings are now open for the Hamlin Ethiopian Adventure in November 2024. Our March trip sold out quickly so be sure to secure your spot for this incredible trip of a lifetime!

Over 12 days, supporters will have the opportunity to see the work of Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia first-hand and explore the highlights of southern Ethiopia.

Places are limited.

For more information or to book your place visit [hamlin.org.au/adventure](https://hamlin.org.au/adventure)



### Itinerary at a glance

- Witness traditional lifestyles of tribal groups in the Omo Valley
- Immerse yourself in markets and meeting places of the ancient Mursi and Karo tribes
- Spectacular Rift Valley scenery
- Insider's tour of Hamlin's Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital
- Visit Hamlin's regional fistula hospital and midwifery clinic in Yirgalem
- Visit the twin lakes of Abiata and Shalla, famous for flamingos and great white pelicans
- Take part in the International Women's Day 5km Run (or walk!)

### Catherine Hamlin Fistula Foundation

Locked Bag 20 Pyrmont NSW 2009 P 02 9440 7001 E [hq@hamlin.org.au](mailto:hq@hamlin.org.au)

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Photos by Amber Hooper, Joni Kabana & Sabahar