



2023 A Year In Review

Heartfelt thanks

This year, we saw the launch of Project Zero, Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia's groundbreaking new program to accelerate the eradication of obstetric fistula in Ethiopia. The pilot in Ale Woreda (district) in south-western Ethiopia concluded in October. Using learnings around the impact and efficacy of this pilot, Project Zero will be implemented in three more woredas in the first half of 2024.

Hamlin's world-class surgeons and clinical team have continued to increase the surgeries performed in Hamlin's regional fistula hospitals. With your support, more women with untreated fistula injuries are being found by Hamlin's patient identification officers and referred for immediate treatment. Also, specialist surgeons at each hospital are providing life-changing surgery to women with advanced-stage pelvic organ prolapse.

The Hamlin College of Midwives is undergoing a major expansion to accommodate the increasing number of students. 256 Hamlin Midwives have now graduated and been deployed to rural areas where they are saving lives and preventing fistulas. A new intake of 25 students is commencing in January 2024. In other good news, 225 former fistula patients have graduated from the Women's Empowerment Program at Desta Mender this year. This unique program gives them new skills to return home with confidence and choices.

It was pleasing to see such a remarkable response to our Giving Day in August. New medical equipment and supplies are now arriving to equip a second operating theatre at our Mekele Fistula Hospital in the Tigray region. The backlog of women urgently needing surgery will soon receive it.

We look forward to another exciting year in 2024, transforming more women's lives and progressing even further towards eradicating obstetric fistula in Ethiopia. I hope you will continue to support us until every woman can deliver her baby safely and no woman lives with a debilitating childbirth injury.

On behalf of the Board and staff of Catherine Hamlin Fistula Foundation, we thank you for everything you do to support the work of Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia. We wish you and your family a safe and happy festive season.

Julie White
Executive Chair, Catherine Hamlin Fistula Foundation



Treatment FY23

3,580 total surgeries*

96% fistula closure rate



Prevention FY23

28,283 babies delivered

38,898 women received antenatal care



Rehabilitation FY23

1,727 patients completed numeracy and literacy education

786 women completed counselling courses



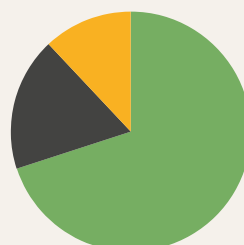
Project Zero: Ale Woreda Pilot

14,664 house-to-house fistula surveys

7 women with long-term fistula found and treated

* includes obstetric fistula and prolapse surgeries

How your donations were spent in FY23



70% Programs in Ethiopia

18% Fundraising

12% Accountability & Administration



Treatment

In Ethiopia, where half of all women experience childbirth without medical help, a woman in obstructed labour can sustain horrific childbirth injuries like obstetric fistula. She is left incontinent and traumatised. Around 93% of women with this horrific injury also lose their baby.

Yet most fistula injuries can be repaired with a single surgery. Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia's globally renowned Hamlin Model of Care focuses on repairing a woman's fistula injury and restoring her dignity and emotional wellbeing.



In FY23, a total of **3,580 surgeries*** (almost 300 surgeries a month) were performed at Hamlin's

fistula hospitals, a 38% increase in surgical procedures compared to the previous year. The **fistula closure rate was 96%**.

The ongoing commitment and determination of Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia's clinical team continues to restore the health and dignity of thousands of women like Bekelu.

"We were helpless and hopeless before we came at Emaye's [Mother, Dr Catherine Hamlin] home. It is here we get treated as a person and get cured." - Bekelu, former fistula patient

"I know you would all be touched if you could see them [the patients] in their plight...but to see them go home with a new outlook and on dancing feet gives us all the joy we need to do this work." - Dr Catherine Hamlin

Project Zero is finding women hidden with fistula

Project Zero, Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia's most ambitious program in decades, will finally make Ethiopia obstetric fistula-free - woreda (district) by woreda.

The pilot in Ale Woreda (district) in south-western Ethiopia concluded in October with encouraging results.

In just one woreda, Hamlin-trained teams carried out **14,664 house-to-house surveys** and **identified 7 women with decades-long fistula injuries** who have been successfully treated.

Using learnings from the pilot, Project Zero will be rolled out to another three woredas in the first six months of 2024.

Healing women with Advanced-Stage Prolapse

Pelvic organ prolapse (POP) affects millions of women globally, and is usually caused by childbirth. While some women may be more susceptible to prolapse, the risks also increase with each birth, as the pelvic floor muscles are stretched and sometimes torn.

For women in Australia, POP is usually easily diagnosed and treated early, resulting in good health outcomes. In Ethiopia, however, where women in rural areas have little access to healthcare, POP can worsen if left untreated resulting in Advanced Stage POP. Studies find the prevalence of POP particularly high in Ethiopian women at 24% or almost 1 in 4 women.

Women with this condition suffer significant discomfort, pain and disruption in daily life and require surgical treatment.

All six Hamlin fistula hospitals have a specialist surgeon with urogynaecology skills to undertake surgical repair of advanced-stage POP.

In FY23, Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia's clinical team performed **over 2,200 POP surgeries**, dramatically improving the health and quality of life for women.

"You change my life from living shamefully. You give us such extraordinary care and affection for free. Thank you for saving my life." - Kiya, former POP patient



*excl. Mekele Fistula Hospital



Rehabilitation

For over 60 years, Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia has been committed to caring for and empowering women, not only through life-changing fistula repair surgery but also through the restorative Hamlin Model of Care.

At Desta Mender, Hamlin's Rehabilitation & Reintegration centre, patients are provided with nutritious food, clean clothing, hygiene items and a Hamlin blanket, physiotherapy, customised counselling programs, literacy and numeracy classes and vocational training. The holistic ethos which underpins all patient care at Hamlin extends to empowering women after they return to their communities.

In FY23, **226 women** enrolled in training and education courses at Desta Mender. **1,727 patients** completed numeracy and literacy education and **786 women**

completed counselling courses. **225 former fistula patients** have graduated from the Women's Empowerment Program. Their new skills have enabled them to return home with hope, choices and independence.



“This blanket serves as a remembrance of my beautiful stay and helps me to recall the day of my cure. They [Hamlin staff] make our bed clean every day, we take shower daily, we get clean pyjamas and blankets, they even make our hair. They are our mothers who let us stay fully served.” - Meseret, former fistula patient

“The patients have a social life together. We see them talking and they feel at home, not being ostracised from their society. They're loved and they feel welcome. So this is where the healing process starts, of the mind, and this is very important.” - Dr Catherine Hamlin

Project Zero is empowering women after the trauma of fistula

Project Zero is finding women who have suffered with fistula for years, even decades. Many have lived in social isolation and been shunned and humiliated by their communities and even their own families.

A core part of restoring a woman's dignity and emotional wellbeing after the trauma of fistula is rebuilding their confidence through new skills so they can earn an income and live independently.

Every woman with a long-term or complex injury who is found by the Project Zero team is able to access tailored counselling, literacy and numeracy classes, vocational and life skills training at Desta Mender.

Expansion of Rehabilitation services in Hamlin's regional fistula hospitals

Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia has recently completed an in depth review of the rehabilitation services at each of its six Hamlin fistula hospitals. Following on from this review, each hospital will establish its own Multi-Disciplinary Team, with case workers for each patient, to expand its counselling, mental health and social support services.

In addition, the core rehabilitation services of numeracy and literacy, handicrafts, life skills training and health education will be improved and upscaled in each hospital.

Ayinalem's life has been transformed by fistula repair surgery





Prevention

Catherine believed that every woman has a right to quality maternal healthcare. Hamlin Midwives save the lives of thousands of mothers and babies every year and prevent countless fistulas. They are the key to eradicating obstetric fistula in Ethiopia.

Since opening in 2007, **256 Hamlin Midwives have graduated** from The Hamlin College of Midwives and been deployed to rural areas. There are currently 71 students undertaking their BSc in Midwifery degree, with a new intake of 25 students commencing in January 2024. Completing a Masters in Clinical Midwifery postgraduate degree are another 53 students.



Every student is on a full Hamlin scholarship, funded by generous donors like you. In FY23, Hamlin Midwives **safely delivered 28,283 babies** and **38,898 women attended their first antenatal appointment** at a Hamlin-supported midwifery clinic.

“Serving the childbearing mothers is important for the mother, for her family, for the society, and for the country at large, because women are the backbone.” - Hareg, Hamlin Midwife graduate

“To be able to train dedicated young midwives is marvellous for me. They become enthusiastic about helping these poor women. One day rural Ethiopia will be full of midwives giving skilled care for mothers in labour.” - Dr Catherine Hamlin

Project Zero is preventing fistula injuries

Project Zero is strengthening maternal healthcare services within Ethiopia to reduce the incidence of birth injuries.

The goal is to establish a midwifery clinic in every woreda (district), staffed by Hamlin Midwives. A national education campaign is giving women the tools and knowledge they need to give birth safely.

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

My first year as Dean – Konjit Kassahun

I was appointed as Dean and Prevention Manager of the Hamlin College of Midwives in 2022 and I am Head of Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia’s nationwide Prevention program. I formerly worked at the Addis Ababa hospital as Matron and Head of Nursing and worked alongside Catherine Hamlin for many years.

I learned numerous skills and knowledge from Dr. Catherine. She was a role model to me and all working in the hospital and we always remember her compassionate care, love and respect for all her patients.

As Dean, I create diverse learning opportunities for our students and staff. In 2022, twenty-two students graduated with an excellent grade and all midwives are deployed to Hamlin-supported clinics in their local areas. All academic staff receive training to enhance skill and knowledge and be a more competent and skillful workforce.

In February 2023, the second cohort of thirty students enrolled in the MSc postgraduate degree in Clinical Midwifery. The first cohort is in four

outreach hospitals doing their internship practice until May next year.

We have purchased essential drugs for 92 Hamlin-supported clinics and continued with the mentoring activities of the midwives.

The challenges we face include a rise in costs which reduces our capacity to purchase drugs and equipment. The security and political instability, especially in the northern part, is challenging our prevention activities and mentorship work, increasing the number of home deliveries and complications in childbirth and death of mothers and their babies.

Thanks to our generous donors, we are giving a very high quality education to our midwives. Training kind, competent and compassionate midwives to prevent maternal and neonatal deaths and prevent obstetric fistula definitely has a very good value for money. Thank you for your kind support of our work!



A safe delivery for *every* woman in Ethiopia



“Soon after I came here at Hamlin and see other women like me, I got relieved and felt hopeful of getting cured. When I am back to home after cure I plan to open a small shop and live an independent life.”

– Genet

If a Hamlin Midwife had been present, Genet’s suffering, grief and loneliness could have been prevented.

Like many pregnant women living in rural parts of Ethiopia, Genet* gave birth at home without a midwife to help her. After enduring an agonising obstructed labour, Genet’s baby was stillborn.

Three days later, leaking urine and faeces uncontrollably, she was told she had sustained a double obstetric fistula injury. For almost three years, Genet suffered in trauma and shame.

Genet received transformative fistula surgery and care at Hamlin’s Mekele Fistula Hospital in the Tigray region, when it reopened after the civil war.

A Hamlin midwife like Hareg is the difference between life and death



Hareg receiving her graduation certificate

It only takes one Hamlin Midwife to transform a community.

Hareg is a recent Hamlin Midwife graduate who has been deployed to a Hamlin-supported midwifery clinic near her home in the Tigray region of Ethiopia.

The exceptional training Hareg received at the Hamlin College of Midwives has given her the skills and confidence she needs to navigate the many challenges

of working in a remote setting. Hareg is excited to return to her local area and provide urgently needed midwifery care to the women in her community.

She told us: “I want to go to Tigray region and I want to work with midwives. I am happy by learning this profession because I want to help those societies to prevent mother and child deaths, as well as complications, especially fistula.”

Catherine Hamlin believed every mother should be able to deliver her baby safely and without harm. Hamlin Midwives play a vital role in ensuring safe childbirth and preventing obstetric fistulas.

With a Hamlin Midwife by her side, a woman and her baby are in safe hands. Thank you for your support this Christmas. You will help recruit, train and deploy more Hamlin Midwives who ensure a safe delivery for every woman in Ethiopia. hamlin.org.au/midwives

Supporting women in Tigray and Hamlin's Mekele Fistula Hospital

Following the end of the civil war in Tigray a year ago, Hamlin's Mekele Fistula Hospital has re-opened its doors in early 2023. It faces many challenges in its endeavour to return to its pre-war level of operation, including equipment in disrepair, expired medication and critically, an increase in the backlog of women requiring fistula surgery.

Your incredible support of our *Raise2Restore* Giving Day in August is already making a big impact. The funds you donated enabled us to start purchasing new medical equipment and medication for a second operating theatre to treat double the number of women.

Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia's management team has completed a thorough assessment to determine the extent of the work needed to restore and update the hospital buildings and replace medical equipment and supplies. Hamlin's patient identification officers in the region are hard at work looking for women hidden away with fistula and transporting them to Hamlin's Mekele Fistula Hospital for treatment and rehabilitation. Five of fifteen Hamlin-supported midwifery clinics near the hospital are being renovated, with ongoing support provided to Hamlin Midwives placed in the clinics.

With your help, we will continue to support our extended Hamlin family and patients in Mekele as they recover from years of brutality and trauma.

November 2024 Hamlin Ethiopian Adventure

Secure your spot for this incredible trip of a lifetime!

Over 13 days, you will see the work of Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia first-hand and explore the highlights of southern Ethiopia.

Places are strictly limited. To book, scan the QR code or visit hamlin.org.au/adventure



6-18 Nov 2024



Give a Gift from the Heart this Christmas



Give a Gift from the Heart this Christmas. Choose from 10 unique cards - each representing a special gift to an Ethiopian woman suffering with a fistula.

Gift cards start at \$20 so there's something for every budget. Every card is tax-deductible with 100% of the proceeds supporting our work.



Choose your card

Choose your card and opt for a physical or printable gift card.



Make it personal

Write a personal message to your friend or loved one.



Send your card

Send your card knowing you are supporting women in Ethiopia.

Catherine Hamlin
Fistula Foundation



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