

SEPTEMBER 2025

Healing Matters

Catherine Hamlin
Fistula Foundation 



“I feel truly free. I feel like my enemy has been defeated and I have emerged victorious.” - Wolaytie



Nothing illustrates the profound impact of your support better than our patients' stories of resilience and transformation. Many women would still be hidden away, silently suffering in pain and shame, without your compassion and generosity.

Wolaytie grew up in a remote village in the Semenari Woreda of southern Ethiopia. After getting married, Wolaytie was happy to find out she was pregnant. Due to the remoteness of her home, she could not access antenatal healthcare during her pregnancy and planned to give birth at home.

But after five agonizing days in an obstructed labor, Wolaytie was carried on a homemade stretcher to the nearest health center where, barely alive herself, she was told her baby was stillborn.

Wolaytie's family paid for an ambulance to transport her to the nearest hospital where her baby was surgically removed. Soon afterwards, still grieving, Wolaytie began leaking urine and feces. She told us:

“I lived with the urine incontinence for 17 years. People said I smelled of urine. They avoided coming to my home. I felt too ashamed to visit others. Even at church, people would leave fearing they might be cursed. I was stigmatized and despised and lived a life filled with tears and embarrassment.”

Wolaytie had no idea there was a cure until the Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia team arrived in her village, searching

for women with untreated childbirth injuries. After initial treatment at Hamlin's Yirgalem Fistula Hospital Wolaytie was referred to Hamlin's Addis Ababa Hospital due to the complexity of her injuries.

There, she was finally cured.

Wolaytie's recovery continued at Desta Mender rehabilitation and reintegration center, where she took courses in dairy and poultry farming, animal husbandry and agriculture as well as handicrafts, pottery and numeracy and literacy. Wolaytie recalls:

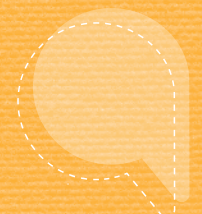
“I once thought no one cared for me but these wonderful people [the Hamlin team] came to find me. I plan to buy a cow, produce dairy products and become a vendor.

I will do my best to make Emaye (Catherine Hamlin) proud. She stood up for women like us when others turned away. She was like a mother to us.”



They are all precious to me. For every patient that comes to us we try to give them all the love, care and expertise that we have to help them to get better and back to a normal life.

- Dr Catherine Hamlin





Pilot 5 launched in Semen Bench Woreda

In exciting news, the fifth pilot of Project Zero began in early September, following four successful pilots in Ale, Didesa, Seharti and Fedis Woredas (districts). To date, over 350 women with untreated childbirth injuries have been found and treated.

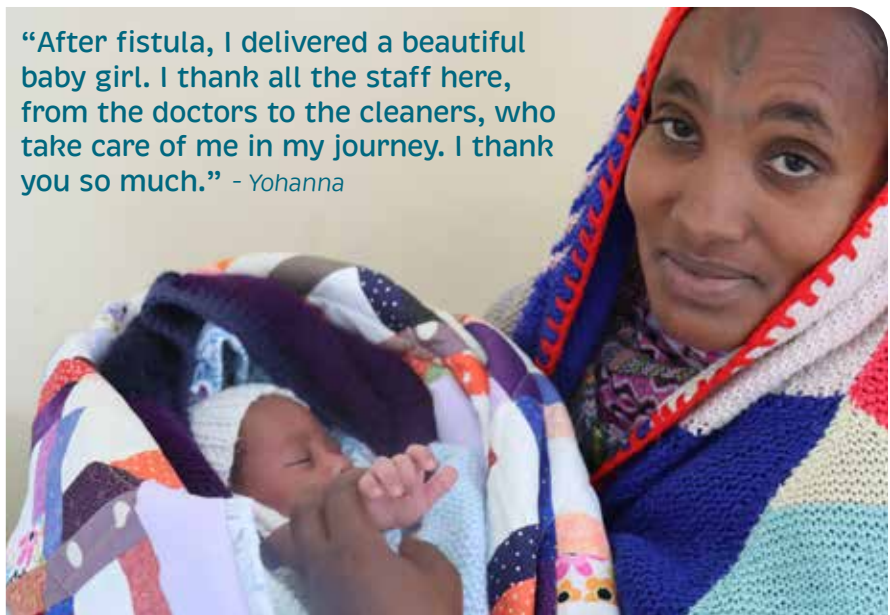
In Semen Bench Woreda, Hamlin-trained teams are now conducting house-to-house surveys to identify women with obstetric fistula and transport them to a Hamlin fistula hospital for life-changing treatment and rehabilitation.

You are igniting change.

Martha lived with an obstetric fistula for a staggering 40 years. Her transformation began when Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia's Project Zero team began a house-to-house survey in her district (Didesa Woreda).

After receiving fistula repair surgery at Hamlin's Metu Fistula Hospital, Martha was warmly welcomed home.

Your support transforms lives.



“After fistula, I delivered a beautiful baby girl. I thank all the staff here, from the doctors to the cleaners, who take care of me in my journey. I thank you so much.” - Yohanna

Your legacy, their future

Is this the most meaningful way you can make a lasting impact?

Remembered as one of the world's great humanitarians, Catherine's extraordinary legacy of love will live on forever.



She continues to inspire people like you to achieve her mission to eradicate obstetric fistula in Ethiopia.

Like Catherine, you can create a legacy of hope, health and transformation for women like Yohanna by leaving a gift in your Will.

Yohanna lives in a small town in the Tigray region. She endured an excruciating three-day obstructed labor before delivering her baby, stillborn.

Grieving, Yohanna was shocked and confused when she began leaking urine a few days later.

She thought she was to blame.

“I was so sad about losing my baby. The leakage of the urine made it even more devastating. Having the fistula was just as painful as losing my child. I cried every day.”

Yohanna received life-changing surgery and rehabilitation at Hamlin's Mekele Fistula Hospital. Much to her surprise and delight, she soon became pregnant again and returned for the safe delivery of her daughter.

Leaving even 1% of your estate to Catherine Hamlin Fistula Foundation makes an enduring difference to the health and wellbeing of Ethiopian women.

[Click here to learn more.](#)



Will you journey into the heart of Ethiopia in 2026?

Book by 31 October and SAVE \$200!

The Hamlin Ethiopian Adventure is not just another trip.

It's a journey into the heart of Ethiopia - rich in history, natural beauty and cultural wonders - while supporting Catherine's extraordinary work to transform women's lives.

This twice-yearly trip offers the perfect balance of adventure, connection and meaning.



♥ Guided visits around Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia's world class health facilities, including the iconic Hospital by the River, the Hamlin College of Midwives, Desta Mender rehabilitation and reintegration center, a rural fistula hospital and two midwifery clinics.

♥ A journey through the Omo Valley, meeting the ancient Ari, Mursi, Hamar and Karo tribes - communities uniquely different from each other.

♥ Breathtaking landscapes, a UNESCO-listed cultural landscape, unique local experiences and incredible wildlife.



♥ A full day touring the extraordinary capital, Addis Ababa, experiencing the largest open air market in Africa, tasting the local staple, injera and visiting Lucy, the 3.6-million-year-old fossil that rewrote human history.

Places are strictly limited so click here to book now and SAVE \$200!

Former fistula patient Alemitu is *giving back*

Did you know many nurse aides working at Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia are former fistula patients? They empathize with women suffering from obstetric fistula as they have experienced similar trauma.



Alemitu saw becoming a nurse aide as an opportunity to give back after the life-changing treatment and loving care she received. "I have worked at Hamlin's Metu Fistula Hospital as a nurse aide for 15 years.

I am very happy to work here.

When I was younger, I got married and I became pregnant. I went into labor at home and endured three long days of pain. My baby was stillborn and I suffered

urinary incontinence. My husband left me, not wanting to stay with me due to my condition. I received the necessary care at the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital.

I will always remember the love and care shown to me by the hospital staff, especially Emaye (Mother, Catherine) who cared deeply for all her patients.

I would like to express my gratitude to the supporters of this organization. May God rest Emaye in peace. She was instrumental in our recovery and supported us in every way. We are here because of her."

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