

Healing Matters



“The care and support were excellent. Now I’m recovering and very *happy*.” - Hiwat



Obstetric fistula stole seven years of Hiwat’s life. Your generosity gave it back.

There is no school in Hiwat’s village in the rural woreda (district) of Tach Gayint. Instead of getting an education, Hiwat helped her mother at home while her brothers looked after the cattle.

When she got married, Hiwat went to live with her husband’s family. Soon after, she became pregnant but following a prolonged obstructed labor, Hiwat’s baby was stillborn and she sustained an obstetric fistula and leaked urine constantly.

“I developed a problem and could not bear the pain. I was very shy and could not tell anyone, not even my mother. I went back to my family saying I had a stomach ache. I lived with the fistula for seven years.” - Hiwat

Desperate for help, Hiwat eventually made her way to the nearest city. She did not know about the free treatment offered at Hamlin’s Bahir Dar Fistula Hospital so she began working as a helper for a local woman - a doctor. Noticing Hiwat’s condition, she took her straight to the hospital. Hiwat told us:

“I am lucky. God led me to a woman doctor. She brought me here. When I arrived, I received surgery. Everything is pleasant and the staff support you in every way. They provide meals and everything I need.”

Following surgery, Hiwat participated in vocational skills training at Desta Mender rehabilitation center. Now cured and able to earn an income,

Hiwat is so grateful to everyone who supported her recovery.



Hiwat (center) at Desta Mender

Because of you, Hiwat’s health and dignity has been restored and she is looking forward to returning to her community.

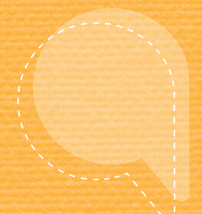


Thank you for your kind support of our recent Appeal. Your generosity is finding and treating women hidden away with childbirth injuries including advanced stage pelvic organ prolapse.
- Julie White, Executive Chair



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 AC



Meet *Dr Leta* from Mekele Fistula Hospital

Dr Leta Gadafa has worked as a fistula surgeon at Hamlin's Harar Fistula Hospital for over six years. One of his recent patients was Sumaya, who was suffering from multiple complications caused by prolonged obstructed labor.

"Sumaya was anemic, malnourished and suffering from infection. She lost her baby and developed obstetric fistula, foot drop neuropathy and a contracture of the knee joint.

Foot drop can occur during prolonged labor when prolonged pressure on the sciatic nerve disrupts nerve signalling. As a result, the patient is unable to properly lift her foot, causing it to drop when walking.

We have begun physiotherapy to address the foot drop, provided iron treatment for anemia and treated the infection," says Dr Leta.

The next stage of Sumaya's care will involve fistula repair surgery followed by rehabilitation and reintegration at Desta Mender. Dr Leta estimates that Sumaya may remain in Hamlin's care for at least a year before she is ready to return home.



"Since coming here, I feel encouraged that I will be cured. I just feel a sense of joy within myself."
- MulFitu

Your support *in action:* When Karen met MulFitu

It's always special to see firsthand the life-changing impact of your support for women.

I met MulFitu on a recent trip to Ethiopia just after she had arrived at Hamlin's Harar Fistula Hospital for surgery. She was found by Mohammed, one of Hamlin's Patient Identification Officers while he was searching for women with childbirth injuries.

My heart broke when MulFitu told me everything she had endured in her young life. Her first child was stillborn and her husband left her, blaming her for their loss. MulFitu also sustained an obstetric fistula. Griefstricken and deeply ashamed, she hid from people and struggled to survive her deepening poverty. MulFitu told me:

"I didn't understand what was happening; it [the urine] just kept flowing. I was told, 'Fistula has been found in you. There is a place in Harar where it can be treated. They can come and take you.' I kept waiting until you arrived."

When a patient bravely shares her story, we ask her to choose a different name to protect her identity. MulFitu chose this name because it means 'to be seen' - which is exactly how she felt when she was

welcomed to the Harar hospital.

"From the moment I arrived I was comforted and given food and water. I took a shower and put on a new gown. I walk around feeling free and I think about how happy I am now. I used to hide and run away from people. Now I walk with joy." - MulFitu

I have met many women like MulFitu and I always carry their stories in my heart. I feel their pain and see their courage. Sharing their transformation is testimony to their strength, resilience and dignity.

Your support makes MulFitu's healing possible - and she is forever grateful.

"You have made it possible for us to be healed and to return to our normal lives. Thank you to all of you." - MulFitu

Karen Foard, Global Head of Fundraising, Marketing & Communications



Karen shares a hug with MulFitu

Restoring lives and strengthening maternal healthcare

Semehal is just one of the women whose health and dignity has been restored as a result of Project Zero (PZ) in Seharti Woreda.

After getting married, Semehal suffered two miscarriages before sustaining an obstetric fistula during the birth of her third child. She recalls: **“Living with a fistula was incredibly challenging. I avoided visitors out of fear of the odor and embarrassment. I often cried and felt overwhelmed by shame.”**

Semehal was found by a Hamlin Patient Identification Officer and taken to Hamlin’s Mekele Fistula Hospital for free treatment, rehabilitation and skills training. She also received financial support to start her own small business.



“The [Mekele] hospital became my second home, offering me hope for recovery and a chance to start anew. The care and compassion were beyond my

imagination. I cannot express my joy at being cured.” - Semehal

Launched in December 2024, the first phase of Project Zero in Seharti Woreda concluded in October 2025, with over 20,000 house to house surveys completed by Hamlin Patient Identification Officers, Hamlin-trained health extension workers and community volunteers.

Maternal healthcare has been strengthened by introducing a Hamlin Midwife Mentor to provide additional support and training to midwives in the woreda.

In total, 105 women with childbirth injuries in Seharti Woreda in the Tigray region have been found and treated, thanks to your support of Hamlin’s Project Zero outreach activities.

Celebrating two decades of life-changing care



On 7 February, Dr Melaku Abraha, fistula surgeon and Medical Director at Hamlin’s Mekele Fistula Hospital and his team celebrated 20 years of restorative fistula surgery and care.

Dr. Solomon Abebe, Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia’s General Manager and Dr. Biniyam Sirak, Medical Director of Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia, joined community stakeholders and former fistula patients in

recognizing the team’s extraordinary work. Representatives from the Tigray Regional Health Bureau, UNFPA and the Women’s Association of Tigray also attended the celebrations.

“Dr. Catherine Hamlin was very wise. She opened hospitals very near to the needy women where they can be treated

in their own language, culture and merits. More than 60% of Mekele hospital is green. Most of our patients spend much of their time in the grassy area where they chat with their friends and feel as if they’re home.

This is one of Catherine’s legacies - we have to keep a green area as if she’s around us. We’re privileged to be part of her legacy.” - Dr Melaku

Sixth woreda for Project Zero

Because of your support, Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia’s Project Zero continues to find and treat women with untreated childbirth injuries while strengthening maternal and child health services in rural areas.

In February, Project Zero was launched in Arbegona Woreda (district), south of Addis Ababa. Awareness-raising and educational activities have started for healthcare providers in marketplaces, schools and religious institutions. House to house patient identification activities began in March.



“Reaching the sixth woreda is a reflection of the passion and commitment behind Project Zero. With every new community we serve,

we move one step closer toward ending obstetric fistula and helping promote sexual and reproductive health.” - Hanna Tesfaye, Project Zero team leader

Join us! Your Hamlin Ethiopian Adventure awaits...

Hamlin Ethiopian Adventure trips depart every March and November and in 2027 you can choose from **two exciting itineraries!**

Each journey begins in Ethiopia's vibrant capital, Addis Ababa, where you will explore the city and learn more about the work of Drs Catherine and Reg Hamlin, who dedicated more than half a century to restoring health and dignity to women suffering from devastating childbirth injuries.

You will visit Hamlin's iconic "Hospital by the River" [Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital], Desta



Mender rehabilitation and reintegration center and the Hamlin College of Midwives.

Beyond the capital, the two itineraries offer different adventures. You may travel south to the culturally rich Omo Valley where you will meet diverse tribal communities including the Ari, Mursi, Hamar and Konso tribes, each with their own unique traditions, and explore Ethiopia's stunning Rift Valley landscapes.

Alternatively, head east and step into the centuries-old walled city of Harar, a UNESCO World Heritage site, and explore the wild beauty of Aledoghi Wildlife Reserve with its incredible wildlife, from Grevy's zebra and Beisa oryx to Somali ostrich and spotted hyenas.

Along the way, you will meet the dedicated doctors, midwives and clinical staff providing life-saving care to women across Ethiopia and meet the brave, beautiful patients whose lives are being transformed because of your support.

Places are strictly limited: click here to learn more! **trip dates are subject to change*

Current trip dates*

2-13 November 2026: **FULL**

3-15 March 2027: **NOW OPEN**

10-22 November 2027: **Expression of interest open**

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