

CHASING ZERO

Treat, heal and empower
every last woman in Ethiopia





Your invitation to help us finish what Dr Catherine Hamlin started



For more than six decades Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia has worked tirelessly to transform maternal health care in Ethiopia so that every woman can be free from the most horrific of all childbirth injuries, obstetric fistula.

Project Zero is our plan to eradicate fistula forever.

Under the pioneering guidance of Drs Reg and Catherine Hamlin, over 70,000 Ethiopian women have had their lives transformed under the Hamlin Model of Care.

While enormous progress has been made – six treatment hospitals, a rehabilitation center and a step change in the recruitment and training of local women as midwives – women are still suffering needlessly.

Around 30,000 women live with the shame and misery of historic obstetric fistulas, with approximately 1,000 new cases each year. Another 200,000 women live with advanced pelvic organ prolapse. These highly treatable and preventable childbirth injuries will continue to devastate women's lives unless we act.

Project Zero is our plan to eradicate fistula forever.

At Catherine Hamlin Fistula Foundation, we are planning the significant final stage of the journey Dr Catherine Hamlin, one of our most remarkable and globally-regarded humanitarians, started all those years ago. She dedicated her life to assuring every woman in Ethiopia a safe delivery and a live baby.

Join us and finish what Catherine started.

- To find and treat every woman in Ethiopia living with obstetric fistula within the next 10 years.
- Prevent childbirth injuries in the future.

For women, for children, for humanity.



The reality for women in Ethiopia



In a country two-thirds covered by mountains, nearly 80% of people in Ethiopia live in rural areas. With the nearest medical care several hours away, half of all Ethiopian women give birth at home with no medical supervision. If there are complications, there are no medical staff on hand to intervene and a woman can remain in labor for several days.

In cases of prolonged, obstructed labor, the mother's delicate tissues in the birth canal are destroyed. The result is one of the worst things that can happen to a woman, an obstetric fistula, an internal injury in the form of a hole between the birth canal and the bladder and/or rectum. It leaves women leaking urine or feces, and sometimes both.

Tragically, 90% of women who suffer an obstetric fistula will give birth to a stillborn baby¹, leaving a woman grieving the loss of her child, incontinent and humiliated.

Without understanding why it happens, the grieving mother is frequently blamed for her condition and subjected to severe social stigma. Many women are left infertile and rejected by their husbands and families. Thousands of women are trapped in this nightmare of pain, shame and isolation, with some women hidden in their homes for years, even decades.

With your help, Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia can help these women and prevent this devastating trauma from happening in future.

¹ United Nations, International Day to End Obstetric Fistula

For 65 years, Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia has been treating obstetric fistula and transforming the lives of women in Ethiopia.

We have developed the global standard in surgical fistula treatment, established a Midwifery College and trained hundreds of local midwives, created a network of more than 90 Hamlin-supported midwifery clinics and developed rehabilitation programs to help end women's suffering, restore their dignity and support their journey back to a full life.

But Ethiopia is a large country and covering all the ground we need cover, within a timeframe that does enough to alleviate the risk and suffering for women across Ethiopia, is a major challenge.

At current rates, it could take 50 years to find and treat every woman suffering from historic obstetric fistulas and advanced prolapse in Ethiopia.

We must accelerate the rate of change for women and eradicate the untold suffering in the villages and countryside of Ethiopia. We have the right tools but we need help to reach our goal in a fraction of the time.

In Chasing Zero, we are seeking committed philanthropic partners to help us scale our proven strategies and fast-track our plan to eradicate fistula forever.

In Ethiopia, 267 mothers die for every 100,000 births. In the USA, the rate is 19².

2 Gumas, E. D., Gunja, M. Z., & Papanicolas, I. (2025, October 1). Maternal and child mortality: How do U.S. states compare internationally? The Commonwealth Fund.



Eradicating fistula

Catherine Hamlin Fistula Foundation has one purpose and one purpose only: to eradicate obstetric fistula forever. The Foundation was established to raise funds and awareness for Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia to eradicate obstetric fistula and related conditions, and support partnership development.

Dr Catherine Hamlin understood that obstetric fistula only exists in countries where maternal healthcare is inadequate, often because of rural remoteness and poor health coverage. She also understood that treatment, while essential and life-changing, is only part of the solution. Preventing fistulas and other birth injuries, and supporting women when they do experience birth trauma, is the key to giving women access to the safe births and life opportunities they deserve.

Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia (HFE) has changed considerably since Drs Catherine and Reg Hamlin first started operating in the early 1960s. Our approach to care, now known globally as the Hamlin Model of Care, has developed over 65 years into the holistic approach that underpins everything we do.



Three pillars of the Hamlin Model of Care

Prevention

Midwives are the key to a fistula-free Ethiopia. Dr Catherine Hamlin established the **Hamlin College of Midwives** in 2007. Over 256 Hamlin Midwives have graduated so far and there are over **90 Hamlin-supported midwifery clinics** across rural Ethiopia. The impact is remarkable. In 2023, Hamlin Midwives delivered 28,283 babies. When a Hamlin Midwife arrives at a clinic, new cases of fistula drop to almost zero in nearby villages.

Project Zero is our ten-year plan to find and treat every woman suffering from an existing birth injury in Ethiopia, and ensure women are less likely to suffer fistula injuries in future, by improving access to and awareness of maternal health care services.

Hamlin's Project Zero team has developed the resources, systems and networks to intervene door-to-door, woreda (district)-by-woreda, to ensure every woman in Ethiopia has access to a safe delivery and every community has a well-functioning midwifery clinic.

Treatment

Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia is globally renowned for its **pioneering surgical treatment** technique developed by Dr Catherine Hamlin and recognised by leading health organisations around the world. Thousands of health professionals from around the globe have visited Hamlin's hospitals over the years to learn from our acclaimed team.

All **six Hamlin Hospitals** provide a range of gynaecological treatments, including advanced pelvic organ prolapse surgery, as close as possible to a woman's home village. Further, all Hamlin patients receive a tailored physiotherapy program to help regain full physical function and compassionate support to restore a sense of self and return to their community with confidence.

Project Zero will bring these world-leading treatments and holistic model of care within reach for every woman suffering from historic birth injuries in Ethiopia and empower them to live full lives, reintegrated into their communities.

Rehabilitation and reintegration

Repairing a woman's fistula is just the beginning. The **Hamlin Model of Care** considers the whole woman with respect and compassion to treat the physical, psychological and emotional effects of fistula.

In 2002, the **Desta Mender Rehabilitation and Reintegration Center** opened its doors to provide a recovery center for women with more complex fistula cases to receive ongoing care, alongside counselling, literacy and numeracy classes, vocational and life skills training to help women return to their communities.

In 2021, a new **Women's Empowerment Program** was launched to give more women the chance to learn vital skills at Desta Mender. Every year, 245 former fistula patients are invited to return for a 2-month residency to learn vocational and business skills. The Hamlin team supports women to take control of their lives, find sustainable employment and even set up their own business upon reintegration into their communities.

“We don't just treat a hole in the bladder, we treat the whole patient with love and tender care, literacy and numeracy classes, a brand new dress and money to travel home.”

– Dr Catherine Hamlin

Chasing Zero: strategic funding priorities



Catherine Hamlin Fistula Foundation seeks to collaborate with philanthropists to finish what Catherine started decades ago.

We are committed to achieving her goal of a fistula-free Ethiopia. Project Zero will do this by building the capacity of our organisation to scale what Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia has been doing successfully for decades.

With your help, we can rapidly accelerate the rate of change possible within the next decade by tackling issues at a far larger scale than is currently possible with existing funding and resources.

To collectively achieve all that we want to achieve, we are seeking multi-year untied funding for these Catherine Hamlin Fistula Foundation funding priorities:

1.

Build capacity

Build capacity in Ethiopia's maternal healthcare system through Project Zero: our intervention and outreach program targeting rural areas.

3-year plan

Work with funders to secure US\$6 million over 3 years to build a body of evidence across 37 woredas (districts) for Project Zero.

2.

Accelerate reach

Accelerate and extend our reach by rapidly scaling Project Zero to achieve our goal to eradicate fistula forever.

10-year plan

Work with a global partner to secure US\$150-200 million over 10 years to rapidly scale Project Zero to the remaining 963 woredas across Ethiopia.

3.

Maintain excellence

Continue what Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia does best: deliver world-leading treatment, prevention and rehabilitation programs.

Current, ongoing

Work with new and existing funders to continue to meet annual operating costs of US\$10 million.



Priority 1

Build capacity

- 1** *Build the overall capacity of Ethiopia's maternal healthcare system*
- 2** *Increase the number of Hamlin-trained midwives in Ethiopia*
- 3** *Work with funders to secure US\$6 million over 3 years to build a body of evidence for Project Zero*



Midwives are the answer to improve maternal health, increase community awareness and prevent birth injuries in future. We must continue to increase the number of trained midwives in Ethiopia through the Hamlin College of Midwives and support Hamlin-trained midwives working in the field through our intervention program: **Project Zero**.

Project Zero is our roadmap to eradicate fistula forever.

Ambitious yet achievable, Project Zero adopts a systematic approach that takes us door-to-door, woreda-by-woreda, to find and treat every woman in Ethiopia living with historic obstetric fistula (30,000 women) and advanced pelvic organ prolapse (200,000 women) and do all in our power to prevent childbirth injuries in the future.

Project Zero's 3-step approach:

1. Identify

Hamlin-trained outreach workers will visit all 1,000 woredas in Ethiopia to find women living with fistula and transfer them for immediate treatment at a Hamlin hospital.

2. Prevent

Clinics staffed by Hamlin-trained midwives will be established in every woreda to improve maternal health care and prevent future birth injuries.

3. Educate

Increase community awareness on the importance of medical care during pregnancy, safe delivery methods and treatment options for women with birth injuries.

Following the success of our 'test and learn' pilot program between March and October 2023, our goal is to secure funding for the next phase of the Project Zero roll out.

In 2024-5, our goal is for Project Zero to be finished in 6 woredas and started in 13 more, then building to 18 woredas in 2026. This will build the body of evidence required to attract substantial funding to successfully scale Project Zero to reach all 1,000 woredas in Ethiopia by 2034.

Your support will mean:

- More Ethiopian women trained as Hamlin midwives and empowered to deliver maternal healthcare in their own communities.
- Increased community awareness of birth injuries and more women receiving treatment.
- Early detection of complications leading to fewer birth emergencies and fewer deaths.





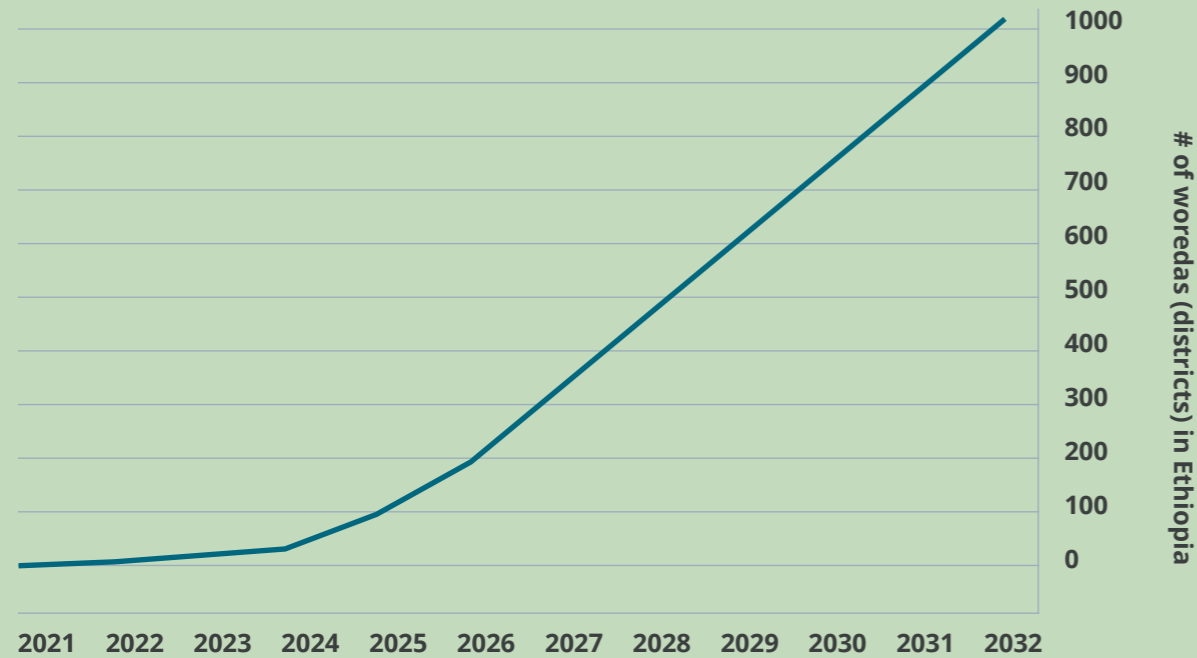
Priority 2

Rapidly accelerate reach

- 1** Rapidly scale Project Zero to find and treat all historic obstetric fistula cases
- 2** Mobilise communities to sustainably improve maternal health care in the woreda
- 3** Dramatically reduce the number of women experiencing birth trauma across Ethiopia
- 4** Develop Project Zero manual to support best practice in fistula prevention and treatment globally



Project Zero Roll-out



Dr Catherine Hamlin gave us the job of finishing what she started. However, in a country of 130 million people, most of whom live in rural areas, finding women living with obstetric fistula has always been a significant challenge.

Within the next three years, our aim is to progress the delivery of Project Zero to the point where we have collected sufficient evidence to prepare for rapid scale up with an international partner.

This will enable us to complete the final stage of our mission to find and treat every last woman suffering from historic birth injuries in Ethiopia, and strengthen maternal health services to ensure women are empowered with the knowledge they need to give birth safely.

Informed by their experience to date, the Hamlin team is already working on a Project Zero manual. The intention is to further develop this manual and for it to become a global standard that guides other country-wide intervention programs around the world.

Project Zero will exponentially increase the scale impact of Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia's country-wide treatment and prevention programs as we move through each stage over the next 5-10 years.



Your support will mean:

- Operational readiness to scale Project Zero to find and treat all women across Ethiopia.
- Exponential increases in access to quality maternal healthcare for women across Ethiopia to care for mothers and babies.
- A proven country-wide model of maternal healthcare focused on prevention resulting in fewer birth injuries and fewer neonatal and maternal deaths to share with other countries.



Priority 3

Maintain excellence



- 1** *Deliver consistent treatment to global best practice standards*
- 2** *Fulfill capacity at all six treatment centres*

Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia is a healthcare network of over 550 Ethiopian staff servicing six fistula hospitals, Desta Mender Rehabilitation and Reintegration Centre, the Hamlin College of Midwives and over 90 Hamlin-supported midwifery clinics.

The Hamlin Model of Care is a winning formula practised across all six Hamlin treatment hospitals. Hamlin-trained surgeons are now treating over 3,500 cases of obstetric fistula and advanced pelvic organ prolapse each year. This is set to increase as we find and treat more women through Project Zero.

However, the cost of delivering healthcare is increasing year on year.

Our ongoing priority is to keep our hospitals and rehabilitation programs running to ensure that every Ethiopian woman in need of care can access treatment at a Hamlin centre. We must also continue to spread best practice globally through Hamlin education and training.

The Hamlin Model of Care has also been adopted as the world's leading approach to the clinical management of fistula, replicated in many countries.



Your support will mean:

- Standardised global best practice for thousands of Ethiopian women each year through the Hamlin Model of Care.
- Increased knowledge and training opportunities for healthcare professionals globally.
- Securing our ability to maintain the real value of staff wages, cover the rising cost of goods and medicines, and support local procurement.



Repairing a woman's fistula is just the beginning. The Hamlin Model of Care considers the whole person with respect and compassion to treat the physical, psychological and emotional effects of fistula.

Midwives save lives



Midwifery students at the Hamlin College of Midwives' campus in Addis Ababa (above)

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
- 96 students are currently undertaking their BSc in Midwifery degree
- 53 students are currently completing their Masters in Clinical Midwifery postgraduate degree
- Every student is on a full Hamlin scholarship, funded by generous donors
- 28,283 babies were safely delivered by Hamlin midwives
- 38,898 women attended their first antenatal appointment at a Hamlin-supported midwifery clinic

The importance of these health professionals cannot be underestimated. Every day, more than 830 women around the world die as a result of complications from pregnancy and childbirth. If midwives were present during birth, up to 90% of these deaths could be prevented¹.

Hamlin Midwives do more than attend deliveries. In serving women in their remote health posts, they provide care for women during pregnancy, support women with family planning and provide post-natal care services while educating the entire community.

“We educate the community and build the networking system among the women in the village. Hamlin also helps us buy medical supplies so we can respond to any complications. If we are working hard together, we can reduce maternal child mortality. We will eradicate the fistula from Ethiopia forever. I hope that.”

“No woman should die giving a life. Since I came here there have been big changes. We used to have 50 deliveries per year and we get fistulas too often. Now we can deliver more than 1,000 babies per year.”

– Hareg, Hamlin Midwife

It only takes one Hamlin midwife to transform a community. We are so proud of these women who are transforming the lives of women in their country.



“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 (of every community).”

– Hareg, Hamlin Midwife and 2023 graduate

A solid case for investment

When you partner with Catherine Hamlin Fistula Foundation, you are partnering with an independent charity established to raise funds and awareness, and support partner development, for Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia.

Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia is a registered charitable organisation in Ethiopia with 65 years of exemplary governance history. Its Board and Leadership Team is 100% Ethiopian, with over 550 Ethiopian professionals working across the organisation to deliver the Hamlin Model of Care for women with childbirth injuries.

Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia is a key partner of the Ethiopian Ministry of Health, respected and supported by regional governments throughout the country for developing the gold standard in fistula treatment and surgical training, and also prevention and rehabilitation, adopted by many countries around the globe.





Proven track record

Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia has been working systemically to develop and deliver the Hamlin Model of Care over 65 years. The end of fistula is in sight.

Transparent reporting

Catherine Hamlin Fistula Foundation reporting is clear and backed by decades of data and evidence-driven impact including the comprehensive Project Zero Review of the Phase 1 Pilot.

Direct impact on the ground

Catherine Hamlin Fistula Foundation directly supports Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia with no intermediaries to create better return on investment and immediate local impact.



Comprehensive and sound governance

Catherine Hamlin Fistula Foundation has been operating for many years with all necessary legal structures in place.

Supported by government in country

Catherine Hamlin Fistula Foundation works directly with Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia and has a long-standing and reputable relationship with local government and stakeholders.

Clear evidence of impact

65 years of working in-country has created a data bank of impressive evidence of impact. Catherine Hamlin Fistula Foundation is capable of effectively communicating impact for funding partners.



Will you join us?

Thank you for the opportunity to share our vision on behalf of the women of Ethiopia.

A vision to restore dignity, hope and opportunity to thousands of women and give future generations of women access to the safe births and life opportunities they deserve.

Our goals are ambitious yet achievable. Now is the right time to build on everything we have learned over the past 65 years to finish what Catherine started.

We invite you to join us in supporting Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia and staff who are dedicating their lives to improving maternal healthcare in Ethiopia. Together we can reach our goal of eradicating fistula forever.

Julie White

Executive Chair

Catherine Hamlin Fistula Foundation

Julie White

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Catherine Hamlin
Fistula Foundation





Thank you Dr Catherine Hamlin

Dr Catherine Hamlin's gift to the world was to open our eyes to the plight of women suffering from obstetric fistula. She is remembered as one of the world's great humanitarians who inspired many to continue her mission to restore dignity to thousands of Ethiopian women.

"Ethiopia lost a true gem who dedicated more than 60 years to restoring the dignity of thousands of women."

***Abiy Ahmed Ali, Prime Minister of Ethiopia
and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate***

"Thank you, Catherine, for the vast legacy you leave for the women and girls of Ethiopia and the world. You were the best of humanity and very special. We all must continue carrying your mission forward."

***Dr Tedros Adhanom, Director-General of the World
Health Organisation***





“My dream is to eradicate obstetric fistula from Ethiopia. I won’t achieve this in my lifetime, but you can in yours.”