Dr. Hamlin Opens
2nd of Five Mini-Hospitals

One step closer to eradicating fistula

The Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital opened its second mini-hospital in the Northern Ethiopian city of Mekele on February 7, 2006. Dr. Hamlin’s warm smile beamed nearly as brightly as the Ethiopian sun, as her team moved closer to realizing their long term dream of eradicating the tragedy of fistula from Ethiopia.

The mini-hospital in Mekele is the 2nd of five planned permanent facilities being built around Ethiopia to help fistula sufferers who are spread throughout the countryside. For years doctors and nurses from the Hospital in the capital of Addis Ababa have been traveling to regional hospitals to operate on fistula victims who could not make the journey to Addis Ababa. The new mini-hospitals will allow Dr. Hamlin and her team to double their treatment capacity in five years, and triple it in ten years.

Mini-hospitals now open in Mekele and Bahr Dahr. New mini-hospitals will eventually operate in Metu, Harrar and Yirgalem too.

The mini-Hospital in Mekele was made possible by generous donations from the Australian government and private donors. The Fistula Foundation, with inspiring support from the Ethiopian-American Community.

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Dear friends,

I know you will all be so excited and pleased to hear that this month we opened our second Fistula mini-hospital - for the women of Tigray Province in the Northern Ethiopia City of Mekele.

The actual opening ceremony was on February 7th. The sun shone down brightly when we all gathered in front of our new building - sitting on chairs and under awnings! Many speeches were made. The spacious ward looked lovely with its beds all in place and curtains on the windows. We are grateful to have such a hospital dedicated to help cure the fistula patients of this huge Province, with its 6 million inhabitants!

Our new mini-hospital is a wonderful and generous gift from Australia, so our hearts are enormously thankful. I could fill this letter with news of this day, but must tell you of other events as well.

For two days immediately after the opening we were here at our hospital, meeting with representatives from overseas supporting organizations, including friends from the Fistula Foundation in the United States. This was a profitable and very worthwhile time - as we discussed the future and shared our aims and vision for our work - especially our future sustainability.

I am pleased to have money invested for our future needs. This is a comfort, especially for me - to know that the women even years ahead who will still be suffering, can be sure of help, until the day dawns when there are no longer any fistula sufferers in Ethiopia! I just hope there are people with vision to see this need, and who will help as we seek to secure the future. I feel sure there are some who will be glad to think they are helping women in 2020 and 2030! I know that with God’s help we shall succeed, as He has never failed us in the past.

With warm greetings from our staff, and with my love.

A letter from Dr. Catherine Hamlin
Hospital Welcomes International Partners

On February 9 and 10th Dr. Hamlin and her senior team at the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital, Mr. Mark Bennett, CEO and Sister Ruth Kennedy, Liaison Officer, hosted guests from seven countries supporting the work of the Hospital. This is only the second time in its 32 year history the Hospital has held such a gathering. Mark Bennett was able to share his vision for the Hospital’s future, including the planned tripling of patient treatment capacity with the opening of the five new mini-hospitals throughout Ethiopia.

The Foundation was able to share its experiences and learn from other organizations from the United Kingdom, Australia, Japan, the Netherlands, Sweden, and the newest organization in New Zealand, the home country of the late husband of Dr. Hamlin, and Fistula Hospital co-founder. Dr. Reginald Hamlin. Participants from the Fistula Foundation in the U.S. included Board members, Kassy Kebede (chair), Dr. Larry William and Deborah Harris, and staff members Kate Grant, Anne Ferguson and Julia Whatley. The Hospital was also delighted to welcome representatives from the Silverton Foundation, founder Pam Ryan and Andy White, Executive Director, and his wife Karen, and Steve Saunders of Texas and his children Kate and Ian.

St. John United Lutheran honors the late Gunvar Bartrand-Larson

In early 2004, the women of St. John United Lutheran church in Seattle, Washington gathered at the home of Gunvar Bartrand-Larson. Her friends at St. John United’s said Gunvar had a lifetime interest in the well being of Ethiopian children. After World War II she set up a school for nurses in Ethiopia and had supported an orphanage in Addis Ababa. Gunvar’s one last wish was to do something charitable and she decided to organize a group at her church to support the Fistula Hospital.

Though Ms. Bartrand-Larson passed away just before Christmas in 2004, at the age of 92, her loving friends carried out her wish by raising money for the Hospital. The group held Church hoagie sales, rummage sales and the like. In addition, the Mission Endowment Committee of the Church contributed matching funds. The Foundation was honored to receive the donation of $10,110.94 in memory of their dear friend Gunvar Bartrand-Larson.
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through the Tesfa Ineste program will fund the building of the mini-hospital in Harrar, in Eastern Ethiopia.

Each of the mini-hospitals will include a 20-bed ward, an operating room, educational facilities as well as other essential facilities. The purposes of the mini-hospitals are three fold:

- Treatment
- Prevention
- Education

The next of the five mini-hospitals, the one in Yirgalem, in Southern Ethiopia is scheduled to open later this spring. Stay tuned!

Like many who saw the January 2004 episode of *The Oprah Winfrey Show* featuring Dr. Catherine Hamlin, Sue Hoese had never heard of an obstetric fistula. The show opened her eyes and moved her to take action. She founded a group called the “Bead Together Circle of Friends” to make beaded bracelets for patients at the hospital, and to raise awareness of obstetric fistula and raise funds for the Fistula Foundation.

By October 2004, she and her friends had made 1,600 bracelets. Sue was invited to join Oprah on her visit to Ethiopia, and presented the bracelets in person to patients at the Fistula Hospital. “It was an incredible, life-changing experience for me. Dr. Hamlin is as loving, kind, genuine and gracious as she appeared to be on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*. I admire the way she truly lives her faith.”

When Sue returned home to Minneapolis, she felt she had to do even more. “My ‘Bead Together’ friends and I decided to design a message bracelet that women around the world could wear to support this cause.” Sue contacted the Fistula Foundation with her idea for the Dignity Bracelet. “We chose the word ‘Dignity’ to inscribe on the main bead because of what the hospital does - it restores dignity to women - and we wanted people who wear the bracelet to feel a connection to the women in Ethiopia.” Sue and her friends connected with Jill Johnson, owner of Minneapolis-based Jilco, Inc., who was so moved by the plight of the fistula women that she is manufacturing and distributing the bracelet at cost. Donors can obtain a bracelet from the Fistula Foundation for a gift of $125 or more.

“I’m so grateful to *The Oprah Winfrey Show* for shedding light on this problem... I will be a life-long advocate for this cause.” True to her word, Sue spoke at a Women’s Day event on March 4 at the University of Minnesota about fistula and the work of the Hospital. Many Thanks Sue!