

Dear reader!

We on the board of The Ethiopia Fund have once again had a successful trip to Ethiopia. This time we visited the new fistula department at Asella Hospital, 175 km from the capital Addis Abeba. This is a small hospital that caters one of the poorest areas of Ethiopia with a population of over 3 million.

We would like to thank every one of you who supported us over the past year with donations of clothes, shoes and jewellery that we were able to bring with us. We managed to pack 115 kg of donated items on our trip (in addition to our own luggage), and we probably still have twice as much leftover to bring the next time we go. It is such a wonderful joy to see such generosity, and even more wonderful is the opportunity to dress up the fistula women in the donated items and see the joy you are all bringing to their lives. Not only are they overjoyed for getting new clothes, but they are also so humble and grateful that anyone at all cares about them! So from all of us and the fistula women in Ethiopia... thank you!



The fistula department in Asella



"Are you here for us?"



"New clothes? Is it possible..."



"Fantastic!"



Celebrations by the way of dance!



Midwife Kari is joining in



Anyone recognize any items that they donated?



Nothing is more fun than seeing pictures of yourself

WAHA (Women and Health Alliance International) is an organization that runs projects for women's health in some of the world's poorest countries. In Ethiopia they run fistula departments in three hospitals: in Gondar, Jimma, and Asella. Dr Mulu Muleta and Dr Ambaye, both Ethiopian, are two of the world's leading fistula surgeons. They operate at the three departments run by WAHA and also work to train up new gynaecologists in fistula surgery.



Anne, Dr Mulu Muleta (who completed her PhD in Bergen in 2010) and Kari

The Fistula Department in Asella operates on 120 fistula cases a year, and there is a long waiting list of new patients. By giving our support towards this department we will be able to increase the number of yearly surgeries by 75, up to a total of 195 per year. The Ethiopia Fund will also partly support the salary of one full-time nurse in the department (there are other nurses but they work part-time), as well as paying for renovations of old sanitary facilities and wards by way of new wall/floor paint, new curtains, and new bed sheets. There will also be upgrades to a small flower garden outside with benches and a fence, giving the fistula patients their own area in the hospital grounds. Due to the smell brought on by their condition they are unfortunately not wanted elsewhere!



This small garden spot will soon be a great pleasure for the fistula patients

When we visited the fistula department in Asella there were 12 women waiting for operations. The morning of our visit six women had been prepped for surgery, and we had the opportunity to observe one of them where Per Anders Gulowsen assisted.



Dr Gulowsen



Dr Ambaye



The happy patient!

In addition to direct support at the department, The Ethiopia Fund also helps “outreach work” in the Asella area. This enables people to go out in the surrounding villages, find the fistula sufferers who may have hidden themselves away in shame, bring them back to the hospital, and give them the attention they require, be it surgery, physiotherapy, new clothes, transport, and/or help integrating back into society. Moreover, we also provide support towards the education of new fistula surgeons.

It's important to heal the fistulas once they have occurred, but it is vital to help prevent them in the first place. In order to do so, we support the education and training of midwives. As we did last year, we also visited The Hamlin College of Midwives where we met both the headmaster and the students. From the fall of 2013 we have pledged to support the education of two midwives at the College who will qualify for a 4 year Bachelors degree. The tuition is \$4,000 per student per year, which means a total of \$32,000 over the four years. After such a programme the College has brought in a policy that the midwives must work for a period of 4 years in rural areas before they qualify as licensed midwives. This qualification period is to help ensure the students don't leave the country for more lucrative positions once their time at the College is finished, but that they stay in Ethiopia where their newfound expertise is so vital.

In addition to The Hamlin College, we also discussed with Dr Mulu Muleta about providing support for midwife students in Asella. The University here takes in 50 new students a year, and with many of them coming from poor backgrounds they could very much use financial help with school supplies and associated activities. The potential possibilities are very exciting!



Midwifery students at The Hamlin College of Midwives

The Hamlin College of Midwives is run by Catherine Hamlin. She also runs the Desta Mender Village of Joy where women with chronic, long-term injuries who are unable to return home can come and live together. The women are trained in various basic skills, such as agriculture, literacy, business, and mathematics, in an attempt to prepare them for self-reliance and integration back into society. During our visit we saw the development of our support last year of €7,000, which included the upgrading of the chicken farm. The poultry house now houses 400 chickens that produce over 300 eggs per day. The eggs are sold at a profit. The leader of the poultry house, a fistula patient, remembered us from last year and held a touching thank you speech!



Desta Mender is a beautiful centre right outside Addis Ababa



The poultry house and its leader, and some produce fields

The Ethiopia Fund's support also covers the artificial insemination of cows at Desta Mender. There have been 4 new calves and three cows were pregnant. They now produce enough milk to cover both the Desta Mender centre and the Fistula Hospital in Addis!

Both the egg and milk production is now running so well that they do not require further external support. We therefore suggested we could give support towards an eventual “start pack” for women who are ready to leave the centre and re-join society at large; such a start pack would include a few chickens ready to start an independent egg production when they leave.

Asella is 2430 meters above sea level and as a result it can get quite cold, even in the summer. Because of this we wish to encourage as many people as possible knit colourful blankets for the women. Such a blanket would become a prized possession for them, due to both the fact that they would keep them warm and the reminder that there are people out there who care for them. Blankets ought to be made from 100% acrylic or ideally from 100% superwash wool (from, for example Europris or Nille). Some helpful instructions can be found here: <http://hamlin.org.au/how-to-help/knit-blanket/>



Various colorful patterned blankets from Desta Mender (Village of Joy)

During the last night of our trip we met and had dinner with Catherine Hamlin and her son Richard. It was as if meeting “Mother Teresa!” She absolutely deserves a peace prize for her humanitarian work. We handed over to her a fistula blanket knitted by Lise Tellefsen that in a corner carried the message “From Norway with Love!” Dr Hamlin is now 89 years of age and continues to operate on fistulas every Thursday – amazing! We have met her twice before, but never have we had the pleasure of spending so much time with her. She is a wonderful and loving woman; open, honest and so much fun. The four hours we spent together flew by so quickly and we will forever hold the experience dear in our hearts.



Handing over the blanket to Dr Hamlin...



Hours lost in deep conversation!



From Norway with love!

The Ethiopia Fund receives donations through CDs recorded for the project. We also enjoy support from companies in Bergen, Norway, of which the Grieg Foundation is our largest supporter. We also have steady, monthly donators, but as our projects become more ambitious we need to reach more people. If you should wish to support us, on a permanent or one time basis, we would so very much appreciate it! A donation of, for example, Kr 100 per month, will over the course of a year give a fistula woman the chance of getting her life back!

If you would like to donate to our cause or help in any way you are able, please contact us at kari.woldseth@helse-bergen.no, kariwm@msn.com or anne@bergepedersen.com. We will accept any and all help with open arms!

100% of donations go directly to supporting the projects.

Norwegian bank account nr. 1201 27 59361



Happiness is... when a cured fistula woman gets her smile back!



<http://www.ethiopiafund.org>