

TRIP SUMMARY ETHIOPIA 7-15 FEBRUARY 2015

Our trip in February 2015 marks our fourth annual visit to Ethiopia. The trip was filled with great moments and valuable experiences, and it is rewarding to see that The Ethiopia Fund's support is being put to worthwhile use. In our luggage this time around we brought 27 colourful home knitted fistula-blankets, as well as hats and socks for new-borns and other assorted items of clothing for mothers.



The board of The Ethiopia Fund is overwhelmed with the generosity of everyone who has supported our mission – all those on the receiving end are filled with genuine happiness and gratitude.



The first night we were invited for dinner by Dr. Mulu Muleta, and the day after we travelled to Asella.



The newly refurbished fistula ward in Asella supported by The Ethiopia Fund.



The newly constructed examination room and cleaning facilities are located at the back of the fistula ward.



The newly constructed ramp means newly operated women can be transported directly from the operating theatre to the fistula ward for post-operative care.



Kari, Birke (health officer), Anne og Seble (ward nurse). The staff gives excellent nursing to the fistula patients as well as lots of tender, love and care.



The bed area is clean, tidy and odour-free. 138 women have been admitted and operated on between February 2014 and February 2015.



The new dining area in lively colours, just like everything else on the ward. Here the national dish injera is being served.

The first thing that greeted us when we arrived was the newly built Tukul erected outside in the cosy yard. This is an area that is reserved for the fistula women, and as a result they have a place to relax together since they are unwanted elsewhere (due to the bad smell).



When we arrived we were very warmly greeted, and all the excited fistula women were waiting for us to take part in the traditional coffee ceremony.



Their reactions were touching. Each and every one of them got up and hugged us without wanting to let go. Their gratitude was heartfelt and it was impossible to hold back the tears.





A lovely time together with the world's best coffee with fresh herbs and popcorn.



The Ethiopia Fund also gives support to midwife students at the university in Asella who come from low-income families and who may not be able to afford to complete their studies.

We were able to meet with one such student, and she promised to give the best, safest, and most loving care to her future patients.

All the beds at the fistula ward were occupied. Some women had just been operated on, and some were waiting for surgery. Two of the women were due their 14-day post-op check-up. That is the day when the catheter is removed and the success of the surgery is verified. One of these two had been suffering from her fistula injury for 34 years! We were very excited to be able to be present during such an event.



The woman was visibly nervous, but Kari and Dr. Muleta gave care and reassurance.



The catheter was removed and there were no leakages!



She is healed and overjoyed at the thought of starting her new life.

Here is the woman who had lived with her fistula for 34 years. She has also just had her catheter removed.



Two former fistula-women healed on the same day!

It was so amazing for us to experience this moment and it truly gives such profound meaning to our work. We feel so grateful for the opportunity of being part of the “miracle” that these women experienced.

Dr. Ambaye and Dr. Muleta had a surprise for us this time.

The following picture is from our visit to the fistula ward in February 2014. At the back is a very shy woman with a green and yellow blanket around her head – she had lost her first child and suffered a fistula.



This time around we were able to meet this woman once again...

... but this time with her newly born healthy child (delivered with caesarean as a normal birth would give her a new fistula). After her fistula had originally been healed she returned home, met a new man, got married, and she was now sitting here as a new mother to a healthy boy. Such joy!





The baby clothes are put in good use by all the newborn children, and also by those that are premature. The warm snug hats fit perfectly!



The Kavli Trust has given support for 5 ambulance motorcycles, and we had been looking forward to seeing them in action in the areas around Asella. Unfortunately, due to long processing times relating to importing them into the country, they were still in customs processing in Djibouti. Dr. Muleta had been told that the required paperwork would soon be completed and that the motorcycles can be put into use shortly.



After Asella we drove to the outskirts outside the city of Nazaret. Here we met with two former fistula women who had been operated on in 2014. The women we met with can be seen in the following picture (the third from the right and the third from the left, back row).



And here third and fourth from the left, standing. Here they are wearing the new clothes they have been given that we brought from Norway.



The trip along the dusty roads in the desert landscapes were long.



Seeing many very small children on their way to fetch water for their families.

The first woman was a widow and had suffered from a fistula for 38 years. She was a lively woman and gave us a heartwarming welcome. She was overwhelmed with gratitude for her being healed.





When we arrived we stirred the interest of all the local children in the neighbourhood and the woman we were visiting had to close the “gate” into the yard area.



She proudly showed off the goats that she had purchased using the small stipend that The Ethiopia Fund gives to all newly operated fistula women after their operation.





Inside the mud hut we were served coffee and food while the woman explained to us the amazing effect on her life the fistula operation had brought.



She had an amazing sense of humour so there was lots of laughter.

Dr. Ambaye and Mulu thought it was fantastic to visit the women at home. To see the change the women had experienced was such a joy.



For the woman it was a big honour that the medical staff had taken the time to visit her in her home.



She treated us visitors from Norway like family, and she recognized us from pictures that are displayed on a notice board in Asella.



Before we left she came out and proudly showed off all the clothes she had been given when she had left the fistula ward as a healed woman. She had likely never owned so many and such nice clothes.



Her gratitude was touching and the loving thank you greeting from Thomas she received with great pleasure.



The other woman we visited had a husband and four children – and she had been suffering from a fistula since she gave birth to her last child. Under the fistula operation she had also been sterilised. Here they are proudly showing off the animals they had purchased with the stipend.



The woman was thrilled that we came and she would simply not let go of Dr. Muleta who had operated on her. Dr. Muleta said she would never have been without this experience as it was so enriching.



The board in The Ethiopia Fund is especially focussed on the prevention of fistula. We therefore wish to build a maternal waiting area associated with the maternity ward in Asella where women with complications in pregnancy, and women who live far away from the hospital, can come and stay a few weeks before their delivery date. This will mean they can help ensure a successful birth for both mother and baby.

**SAFE-MOTHERHOOD INITIATIVE
A SUCCESS AND A CHALLENGE
ATTAT HOSPITAL EXPERIENCE 1987-2008**

INTRODUCTION:

Maternal mortality is strictly related to lack/poor access to health services

Presented May 2009

STRATEGIES DEVELOPED AT ATTAT HOSPITAL:

- ANTENATAL CARE AND REFERRAL OF HIGH RISK MOTHER
- ADMISSION OF HIGH RISK MOTHER IN MOTHER WAITING AREA
- CONFIDENCE OF MOTHERS TO BE WILLING TO COME TO MWA
- FAMILY PLANNING
- COOPERATION WITH THE HUSBANDS
- CONTINUITY OF STAFF AND STAFF DEDICATION AND INVOLVEMENT
- A HOSPITAL / HEALTH CENTRE CAPABLE OF HANDLING OBSTETRIC CASES

**MOTHER WAITING AREAS (MWA):
1st TURUL 1973 G.C.**

**NEW BUILDING (1999) FOR
HIGH RISK MOTHERS**

**MAIN REASONS FOR ADMISSION TO THE MATERNITY
WAITING AREA**

- Previous Caesarian Section
- Poor obstetric history (e.g., still birth, repeat abortions, etc.)
- Suspected twins/malpresentation
- Pre-eclampsia/medical reason
- Short stature/primigravida from a distance
- Grand multipara
- Previous rupture and/or fistula

Because of this, we invited ourselves to the hospital Attat where they have a successful example of such a maternal waiting village started in 1976.

We were shown around by the medical director and gynaecologist Rita Schiffer, a wonderful and warming person who has dedicated her life to the Ethiopian people. She shared with us, that because of the maternal waiting village they now rarely received women with fistulas. In the past two years she had only seen and operated on one woman.



Dr. Ambaye knew Dr. Schiffer well from before, as it was she who had trained her in fistula surgery many years ago at The Hamlin Fistula hospital in Addis Ababa.



When the maternal waiting village was started there was only space for 15 women. Today it can hold 48.



All women must be accompanied by their husbands or another relative (or a friend), as well as provide her own food, drink and wood to use for cooking.





They are also responsible for doing their own laundry, and keeping the areas clean. They also have obligatory daily education on topics such as pregnancy, childbirth, childcare, and health.

Here is a little boy that was born a few minutes before we arrived. The birthing suite in Attat is only 2 minutes walk from the maternal waiting village, and this is what we aim to achieve in the future for the women in Asella.



The Ethiopian government wishes to donate the plot of land in Asella you can see in the picture below. Unfortunately it is located relatively far away from the hospital (a 5 – 7 minute drive). Dr. Schiffer stressed the importance of it not being more than a 3 minute walk away if it is to be successful. A short distance is necessary if complications arise that require immediate medical attention. Dr. Muleta is currently negotiating in an attempt to find a location closer to the hospital. We hope this is successful in the near future as such a facility is in great demand in this poor region that houses a population of four million.



In our fight to prevent fistulas there is perhaps nothing more important than the education of midwives at a high level. That is why we today support a four-year bachelors degree for four midwifery students at The Hamlin Midwifery College in Addis Ababa.



Here we are meeting with two of our first year students – Etenesh and Birke – who at the moment are interning at the well known Catherine Hamlin’s fistula hospital in Addis.

And here with our two second year students – Neima and Kidan - who are interning at a health/birthing centre outside of Addis.



We keep in continuous touch with the midwife students and we hope to follow them through their educations and into their careers (they will start off with a four year obligatory period in the villages where they themselves grew up – this to “repay” for the free education they will have received).

One of the goals of The Ethiopia Fund is to receive enough support that we can be involved with the education of two new midwifery students every year.

We also returned to Desta Mender, the village for fistula women who are unfortunately not able to be healed (ca. 10-15%).



Here we visited the Birtat café that we gave support to last year. This is the brown building in the picture and serves the midwife students that live in the dormitory close-by. The white buildings belong to The Hamlin Midwifery College.

Seeing the café again was a joy. New from last year was the wonderful cloth that had been hung from the ceiling.





The woman on the left is the one that started and runs the café. In addition to an untreatable fistula she also has polio, but she does not let this stop her. She employs a further two – the woman on the right is her assistant and the one in the middle has just been trained in the running of the café.





Here we are together with Tadessa, the leader of Desta Mender who works non-stop for these patients. It is great to be able to work with a person such as herself.

For 2015 we are supporting the training of three new fistula women from Desta Mender in the production of ceramics. We unfortunately did not get the opportunity to meet these three women, but we hope to see the results of their work when we return in Sept/Oct. 2016.



When we were not on the road we were lucky to meet lots of interesting people with the same shared goals as us. Here we are with Hiwot Wubshet, the former leader of the midwife association in Ethiopia and now leader for the Maternity Foundation (Denmark) in Ethiopia. We first heard about her through the Kavli Trust, and we hope that we can have a good working relationship in the future as we share aims and goals – to improve the conditions for women in Ethiopia.



We want to finish by thanking everyone in WAHA and the Hamlin organisation. They put their entire minds and souls into their work for the women of Ethiopia, even though they could easily use their expertise and make lots of money in other countries. Their work in Ethiopia gives them more joy than anything else! It is truly an honour for us to have the opportunity to work with such great people.

We would especially like to thank our main supporter Grieg Foundation , the Kavli Trust, Sigdal Kjøkken (for free accounting services), family and women's groups, and last but not least, all you individuals who support the project. Thank you for your trust. Without you none of this wonderful work would be possible.

Warmest regards from the board of The Ethiopia Fund.

www.ethiopiafund.org



HAPPINESS IS WHEN A HEALED FISTULA WOMAN GETS HER SMILE BACK!