

## **Soroptimist International President's Appeal 2007**

### **Restoring Dignity: Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital & Village**

The 2007 December 10 SI President's Appeal aims to assist Ethiopian women with (obstetric) fistulas and provide on-going care for those who cannot be fully healed. The Appeal will help fund the special village 'Desta Mender' for long-term patients who have been shunned by their communities, and allow for its expansion. The Appeal will encourage dignity, self-esteem and independence for these women.

#### **THE PARTNERSHIP**

The partnership is with the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital, set up in 1974 and managed by the Hamlin Fistula Welfare and Research Trust in Ethiopia. This is the only facility in the world exclusively dedicated to treating (obstetric) fistula and serves as a centre of excellence in training. It has pioneered surgical techniques and methods for the physical and psychological rehabilitation of women.

To date, approximately 1200-1400 women are attended to annually with a 93% success rate, and over 24 000 women have been cured since the hospital opened. All are treated free of charge. There are plans to open further clinics in remote parts of Ethiopia where 4000-5000 women will be treated annually.

In addition to the hospital, village Desta Mender was established outside Addis Ababa (central Ethiopia) for women who could not be completely cured and therefore could not return to their village. Ongoing care is provided and vocational skills such as crafts, knitting, dressmaking, nursing training, catering, animal husbandry and agriculture are provided. These women also put their skills to good use in the local orphanage.

#### **WHAT IS OBSTETRIC FISTULA?**

A fistula is an unnatural tear or hole between two organs. Long obstructed labours can cause a fistula to the birth passage, bladder and sometimes, the rectum. As a result a woman may leak urine or excreta constantly. In Ethiopia, these women are shunned and rejected by their communities because of their smell.

It is estimated that 1:20 pregnancies suffer obstruction or severe difficulties in childbirth. Access to modern health aids such as ambulances and helicopters, birth choices, medical equipment, medicines and facilities ensures a high rate of health and survival for both baby and mother. It has also led to the decline of fistulas in the western world. In the developing world, however, women are faced with 3 overwhelming factors: poverty, remoteness (rural), and being female. As a result of difficulty in getting to hospital or medical care, women may spend days without medical access, greatly increasing their chances of labour difficulties resulting in (among many other things) fistulas.

#### **HOW TO DONATE:**

Make check payable to SI Salem, noting in the memo "President's Appeal 2007," and mail to SI of Salem, P.O. Box 503, Salem, OR 97308. A combined check will be sent to SIA Headquarters in Philadelphia.