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Edna Adan Ismail

Edna Adan Maternity Hospital, Republic of Somaliland

Safer motherhood in Somaliland

Following a long and devastating civil war with Somalia, Somaliland emerged from that war in 1991 with its infrastructure destroyed, most of its health professionals killed and no resources available to address the health problems of the people. In addition to this, the lack of international recognition of Somaliland was another obstacle that hampered the provision of adequate health care and education that were needed to recover from the human rights violations they faced during the war. In light of these problems, Dr Edna Adan Ismail, a nurse and a midwife herself, made a decision that initially focused on building a maternity hospital to care for the needs of women and their babies. Since the hospital was opened in 2002, it steadily grew to become a regional referral and teaching hospital which has helped to reduce by 3/4 the alarming rates of maternal mortality and morbidity in Somaliland (63 maternal deaths among 22,000 deliveries that were assisted during the past 16 years=MMR of 280/100,000). Being a referral hospital, this reduction became possible through the set-up of a facility that has a 24 hour readiness to deal with obstetrical emergencies, including fully functional operating theaters, a Resident Anesthetist, blood bank, laboratory and the accelerated training of midwives that could be deployed to hospitals as well as to all corners of Somaliland where communities had never had health services nor ever seen a trained health professional. Finally, to improve education, training and therefore services, Dr Edna Adan Ismail also founded her own university in 2011 which trains doctors, midwives, nurses, laboratory technicians, dentists, veterinarians, pharmacists, nutritionists and public health specialists. As women had been previously excluded from education, the Edna Adan University favors applicants from young women as well as students from a disadvantaged background. Furthermore, the hospital addresses a wide range of human rights violations and works towards the eradication of FGM, a fight which Dr. Edna pioneered in 1976 when no one dared to speak out against this terrible practice.

Biography

Edna Adan Ismail is the former Foreign Minister of Somaliland Republic (from 2003 until 2006) and had previously served as Somaliland's Minister of Family Welfare and Social Development. She is the Director and Founder of the Edna Adan Maternity Hospital in Hargeisa and an Activist and pioneer in the struggle for the abolition of female genital mutilation. She is also the President of the Organization for Victims of Torture.

ednahospital@yahoo.com