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Former First Lady and Foreign Minister of Somaliland, Launches Edna Adan Hospital Foundation

A US-Based Charity Backs Efforts to Decrease Maternal Mortality, Increase Training of Nurses and Midwives

Washington, DC -- Edna Adan, the founder of the Edna Adan University Hospital in Somaliland will be honored tonight at a reception at the Dacor Bacon House located at 1801 F Street, NW Washington, DC. A press conference with Edna Adan will be conducted immediately before the event at 5:30 PM Friday October 25th. All press are encouraged to attend to meet this dynamic woman.

This is one of two inaugural events for the newly commissioned Edna Adan Hospital Foundation, an organization dedicated to providing equipment and scholarships for the Hospital's midwife and nursing programs. Sarah Craven, Chief of the Washington Office of UNFPA, United Nations Population Fund, will introduce Edna Adan. "I am very appreciative that the Edna Adan Hospital Foundation has been set up in Washington, DC in order to help us provide healthcare to poor patients, as well as provide training of health workers back home. It is also a foundation that has been initiated by Somalilanders to develop their self-help initiatives," states Edna Adan, Founder and Director of the Edna Adan University Hospital.

Edna Adan was featured in the PBS documentary "Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide," based on the book by the same name by journalists Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, and enjoys ongoing support from actress Diane Lane who participated at a luncheon co-hosted by the Edna Adan Hospital Foundation and Vagisil earlier this month.

Edna Adan has been conducting training programs since 2001 with a goal of training 1,000 skilled nurses and midwives. The program is sorely needed; [insert stat about maternal death during childbirth in Somaliland to demonstrate why program is needed?]. An unrecognized but sovereign state, Somaliland has enjoyed peace and relative stability for the past 22 years. Somaliland is self-governing, has its own monetary system, issues its own passports and conducts diplomatic relations with various neighboring countries. Somaliland operates a local police and military, ensuring stability in the country, yet the only consistent source of quality medical care in the country is provided by the Edna Adan University Hospital.

"Edna is a personal hero of mine because of her courage, her generosity and her commitment to women's health. Her hospital is a prime example of what we strive to fund at Fistula Foundation. She's earned the love and respect of her community, and women know that they can rely on her hospital for

high-quality treatment provided in a culturally sensitive manner,” said Kate Grant, CEO of Fistula Foundation, a nonprofit that funds treatment at Edna Adan University Hospital and at 37 other sites around the world for the childbirth injury of obstetric fistula. Somaliland has one of the world’s highest rates of infant and maternal mortality. This correlates with the cultural practice of female cutting, which is still prevalent in many parts of Africa. The Edna Adan University Hospital is a major community effort to increase health care for women in Somaliland.

High quality photos of this event will be available at www.ednafoundation.org.

About the Edna Adan Hospital Foundation

The Edna Adan Hospital Foundation is a nonprofit organization based in Washington, DC, which exists to raise awareness and increase support for the Edna Adan University Hospital located in Hargeisa, Somaliland. Our mission is to provide critical resources and to increase the number of trained nurses, midwives, laboratory and pharmaceutical technicians in Somaliland. For more information, visit www.ednafoundation.org.

Edna Adan Ismail Biography



Edna Adan is the director and founder of the Edna Adan Maternity Hospital in Hargeisa, Somaliland. An activist and pioneer in the struggle for the abolition of female circumcision, Edna is also president of the Organization for Victims of Torture. She previously served as Foreign Minister and First Lady of Somaliland.

Edna was born in Hargeisa, the daughter of a well-known Somali medical doctor. When she was 15, a girls' school opened in Somaliland. Adan went to work there as a student teacher and also received private lessons. She was permitted to sit for exams, in a room separate from the boys, and was the first Somali girl awarded one of a few coveted scholarships to study in Britain. She spent seven years there, studying nursing, midwifery and hospital management, and was the first Somali girl known to do so. When she returned home to Somaliland, she became the first qualified nurse-midwife in the country and the first Somali woman to drive a car. In 1976, Edna became first woman to be appointed to position of Director in the Ministry of Health in Somalia.

Edna began her dream of building a hospital in Somalia in the mid 1980's, but was forced to leave the country when the Somali Civil War began. She was then recruited to join the World Health Organization (WHO), where she held various key positions advocating for the abolition of harmful traditional practices, such as female genital cutting. She was also responsible for training of midwives and traditional birth attendants in the 22 countries of the Eastern Mediterranean Region of WHO. She was the representative of WHO in Djibouti from 1991-1997.

Upon returning, Edna pursued her dream of opening up her own hospital. She sold all of her possessions (including her prized Mercedes). The only spot available for Edna to open the hospital in Hargeisa had been used as a trash dump since the civil war.

The project faced difficulty yet again when the project ran out of money, and the hospital still did not have a roof. With the help of donors and merchants, the hospital officially opened on March 9, 2002. Her hospital currently has a mortality rate one quarter of the national average and she hopes to bring medical care to all of Somaliland by training 1,000 midwives. On February 2010, Edna was Knighted by President Sarkozy who made her 'Chevalier dans l'ordre Nationale de la Legion d'Honneur' of France. In 2011, Newsweek included her in the list of the 150 Women Who Shake The World. She was also included to the list of 100 most inspiring individuals delivering for women.

Edna was added to the Medical Mission Hall of Fame at the University of Toledo. She holds an honorary doctoral degree from Clark University in Massachusetts, received Honorary PhD from Ahfad University for Women in Sudan, and was made honorary fellow of Cardiff University School of Nursing in Wales.

Edna is featured in the PBS documentary Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide, inspired by the book of the same name by Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn.