



## “Because God did a Miracle”

Dr. Sharon Morad is an OB/GYN who served in Ethiopia and Kenya through the Post-Residency Program

I managed to survive my first month in Ethiopia. There is no amount of reading and discussing that can really prepare you for the kinds of things faced on a regular basis here. Many of the stories are heartbreaking, some are rather gruesome, and a few have surprisingly happy endings. But these people are the reason why God brought me here.

Ethiopian women fill me with awe. They work incredibly hard in the fields and the market. They endure the danger of pregnancy and are the foundations of family wellbeing. They are tremendously hospitable and retain a sense of humor, often displayed when I try out my fumbling Amharic (the native language of Ethiopia)! It is a privilege to serve them.

Sadly, many Ethiopian women bear one child after another until one of their pregnancies kills them. If a mother dies, her surviving children are three times more likely to die before the age of five.

An 18-year-old girl came to us in her second pregnancy. The first delivery had been prolonged and resulted in a stillborn baby. This time she had been laboring for five days before traveling 60 miles to reach us. By the time she arrived, the baby had died and the mother was extremely ill, in shock with respiratory compromise. Sadly, the insult to her body was too great and she died eight hours later.

A 20-year-old woman had been coming to us for antenatal care. I saw her for review during my first week. She was at about 34 weeks and doing pretty well. Four weeks later, she returned. The baby had not grown at all and she had developed pre-eclampsia. We induced labor, but the baby did not tolerate contractions, so we proceeded to Caesarean section and delivered a 3lb, 10oz little girl.

The father had been unusually engaged in her care—more so than I’ve seen with any other father here. While his wife recovered from the operation, he took it upon himself to keep his daughter warm through “kangaroo care”--holding the baby skin-to-skin on his chest and wrapping blankets around them both. Both mother and baby are doing very well. With such a devoted

father, the women of this family should thrive.

One abandoned little boy was rescued by a missionary who runs an orphanage in Soddo. His mother was a 14-year-old who had been raped. I helped look after him for the first few days until he was feeding and sleeping well. He is now thriving in the orphanage and they are looking for an adoptive family. After a particularly bad week with a lot of horrible stillbirths, it was lovely to comfort a living baby.

Another little boy is one of the lucky ones. His mother came to us in obstructed labor, but he was still alive—just barely. We performed an emergency Caesarean section, but about 18 hours later, he began to have seizures.

We have almost no neonatal equipment and no IV anticonvulsants. So, we tried to give IV glucose at a rate of two drops per minute, and I had to crush 1/6 of a phenobarbitone tablet and give it orally with expressed breast milk.

At 3:00 a.m., after repeated doses and recurrent seizures, I was close to despair. I just held him close and prayed—and the convulsions stopped. Five days later he went home, behaving normally. His mother told our nursing students, “He is here because God did a miracle.”

Prayer means more when you can't pretend you're doing it all yourself. God has been faithful, though it has not been easy. I take joy in every small victory. Every live mother and every healthy baby should be cherished. Thank you for your love and prayers.

**About the Physician:** Sharon Morad, M.D.

Dr. Morad is a graduate of University of Leeds Medical School and completed her residency with West Midlands Deanery in the UK. She is currently serving at Soddo Christian Hospital in Ethiopia as an Obstetrician and Gynecologist.