



# Transformations

News from the Fistula Foundation, Summer 2009

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## Fighting Fistula in Afghanistan Foundation helps Afghan women get fistula care

The Fistula Foundation made its second grant outside of Ethiopia to the CURE International Hospital in Afghanistan. CURE has a stellar reputation for their work in many impoverished nations. (Read more on page 3.) The Foundation provided a \$50,000 grant to expand fistula treatment capacity in Afghanistan where many believe there is a hidden epidemic of fistula.

Afghanistan's health care system was decimated by more than 25 years of war and violence. Sadly, the breakdown of the Afghan health care system had a particularly devastating impact on women and children. The severe shortage of qualified female physicians in Afghanistan limits the government's capacity to address significant maternal and child health problems. Every 30 minutes, an Afghan woman dies during childbirth. The country has nearly the highest maternal mortality rates in the world at 1600 per 100,000 live births and in some regions it is several times greater than that.



44 years is the average life expectancy rate for women in Afghanistan and 70 to 80% of women face forced marriages.

Under the Taliban, teaching about the human reproductive system and female anatomy was prohibited. Afghan physicians who trained during this period, and to some extent during the prior civil war, became doctors without any education in obstetrics and gynecology or any other female health concerns. Combine that situation with grinding poverty and it is easy to see why fistula is a huge problem.



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## Transformations

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# Letter from our Executive Director

Dear Friends,

We recognize the profound need for fistula treatment in countries and communities outside of Ethiopia; that's why we've broadened our mission to support fistula care in more countries where women need help. We're delighted to let you know that we've provided new grants to hospitals in Afghanistan, that you will read about in this newsletter, and also in Angola, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.



*Kate Grant, Executive Director,  
Fistula Foundation*

With the generous support of people like you, many women in these countries can get the care they desperately need. We are particularly pleased to provide critical grant support to the CURE International Hospital in Kabul, (described on page 3). As with another grantee, the Panzi Hospital in DR Congo, the surgeons at CURE are being trained by surgeons from the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital.

We hope that the newsletter will also give you a sense of the strong admiration and appreciation we have for donors like you who help fund the healing of otherwise forgotten women. Deep and generous hearts are found in many diverse locations: a high school group in New Jersey knitting shawls for patients at the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital, Dining for Women members from around the country who've hosted dinners to raise funds, and a California couple starting out on one of the greatest of life journeys—marriage—who've asked their family and friends to make a donation to the Foundation in lieu of a gift. We are inspired by the generosity and self-less support we receive from many people across the United States – support that helps restore dignity to the lives of women a world away.

As we move forward with our new mission to tackle fistula worldwide we look forward to keeping you updated on our progress. We remain grateful for your loyal support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kate Grant". The signature is stylized and includes a star-like flourish at the end.

Kate Grant  
Executive Director

## LATEST NEWS

- **Dr. Hamlin was honored on May 30th at Desta Mender**, with visitors from around the world celebrating her 50th anniversary in Ethiopia. An original artwork by California artist Robert Johnson was presented to Dr. Hamlin. Many thanks, Robert!

*Dr. Hamlin with the artwork  
by artist Robert Johnson*



Students and teachers, "Women Helping Women" display their work

## Women Helping Women knit blankets for Ethiopian Patients

In Manhawkin, New Jersey, in the Southern Regional High School District some of Southern's students have been knitting with a mission. Once a week students have gathered in the science room of Mrs. Ruth Tummey. "It started as a down-time for girls to gather and have tea. Students felt comfortable and starting bringing their friends," said Tummey. As the group expanded, sophomore Rachel Marino suggested to "knit for a purpose". Emma and Mia Maschal suggested the Women Helping Women organization. Their mission is to help the Fistula Foundation in its efforts to treat and prevent obstetric fistula, the devastating injury caused by obstructed labor. It was just the purpose the group needed. Students experienced at knitting and just learning have been casting 30 stitches to knit squares since October. The students and teachers are looking to continue their work into next year and are accepting old and unwanted yarn. With the help of teacher Mrs. Jean Korte, the squares are sewn together and then packaged and mailed. "We just sent four blankets to Ethiopia today," said Korte. A special thanks to Ruth Tummey for providing the Foundation with this inspiring story and to our long time friend and supporter Gail Murray for all her work to provide knit blankets to the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital. 

## CURE Hospital Afghanistan – A Recognized Center of Excellence

The CURE International Hospital in Kabul is a recognized center of excellence for reproductive health care. A recent survey by medical experts from the U.S. Military and the Ministry of Public Health in Afghanistan deemed the CURE International Hospital as the best facility in Afghanistan for women's reproductive health care. The facility is a 90 bed hospital with 28 beds devoted to ob/gyn and fistula care.

The support from the Fistula Foundation will provide CURE with resources to expand their treatment for Afghan women suffering from obstetric fistula through specialized training for Afghan health workers. The further development of this expertise is very much in line with CURE International's core vision to teach specialty surgery in the developing world.



The goal of the CURE International's project funded by the Foundation is to increase the skill and number of health care providers able to treat obstetric fistula in Afghanistan in order to expand treatment of women with fistula in Afghanistan.



- **The Foundation completed its 2008 annual audit** conducted by the accounting firm of Delagnes, Mitchell and Linder, LLP. A copy of the Foundation's 2008 Audited Financial Statements is available on our website or on request.
- **Susan Wilson of Princeton, New Jersey, founder of the Network for Family Life Education**, is also a long term supporter of the Foundation. Susan cited our work in her Rutgers's University blog: [answer.rutgers.edu/blog/](http://answer.rutgers.edu/blog/) in an article titled: "Childbirth: More Difficult Than You Think".

## Fistula Foundation supports Harar Waiting Hostel

### New building for patients awaiting surgery

The Foundation is pleased to be able to provide funds to support the construction of a waiting hostel in the new hospital in the Eastern Ethiopian city of Harar. As you may remember, the Harar Hospital was built entirely with funds provided by the Fistula Foundation (\$740,000). The Tesfa Ineste program, a Foundation fundraising effort within the Ethiopian-American Community, provided approximately \$280,000 of that total, with the Tesfa Ineste Team in Washington, DC raising most of the funds.

The new waiting hostel will free up valuable bed space in the main hospital. Patients who are not in need of



*Harar Waiting Hostel under construction*

immediate or intensive intervention, or may be awaiting a second operation can be housed in this new hostel. The women housed in the hostel will need a lower level of staff support than women in the main ward. The hostel will also include a second floor where visiting

doctors and other guests will be housed. The hostel represents another sound step forward to increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of Hamlin Fistula Hospitals in Ethiopia. 

“*There is a tremendous need for a center of excellence to offer training to Afghan physicians in gynecologic fistulae. I know of no better location for such a facility than the CURE Hospital.*”

*—Dr. Gary David, Office of the Surgeon General of Afghanistan, US Army MD*

### A Generous Young Couple

Many young couples planning a wedding visit department stores and register for everything from china to toaster ovens. Alexandra Lockett and Paul Hauser had another idea. Rather than encourage their friends and family to buy gifts for them, this generous young couple asked their wedding guests to make donations to the Fistula Foundation. In July they were married at a ceremony in the countryside of Northern California. We wish Alex and Paul all the best in their new life together. We are grateful for their capacious hearts – and their ability to demonstrate a deep caring for the welfare of otherwise forgotten women a world away.



*Alexandra Lockett and Paul Hauser*

# Dining for Women – loyal supporter of the Fistula Foundation

## DFW explains their support of the Fistula Foundation

When Dining for Women (DFW) learned of the work of the Fistula Foundation a few years ago, its members were excited to see that the Foundation's aims resonate so deeply with DFW's own mission. Dining for Women is a national non-profit organization based in Greenville, South Carolina. It empowers women globally who live in extreme poverty by funding programs fostering good health, education, and economic self-sufficiency and cultivates educational dinner circles inspiring individuals to make a difference through the power of collective giving. Each month, DFW chapters all over the country meet and learn about a featured monthly program, have a potluck dinner or lunch, and donate the money that they would have spent eating out to the featured program. DFW pools the money and donates the lump sum to a carefully selected recipient organization. DFW envisions small groups of women forming dinner chapters throughout the world, combining their energies to improve the quality of life for women and children living in the developing world.

The Fistula Foundation's aid of women in developing countries with fistula aligned with DFW's aim to support health programs for low-income women in developing countries. Members have been deeply touched to learn of the agony of fistula sufferers, the isolation and embarrassment that they endure, and thrilled to learn that the Fistula Foundation works hard to cure this terrible condition, to offer them a second chance in life through the expertise and generosity of doctors at hospitals supported by the Foundation. DFW was proud to feature the Fistula Foundation as a sponsored program twice in the early years of the organization and again in 2008, having raised \$345 in 2004, \$565 in 2005, and \$14,732 in 2008 for the Foundation.

*Many thanks to Devon Anker of Dining for Women for providing us with this article about their work.*

*Polly Ferguson and the Dining for Women chapter in San Jose, CA*



## A WALK TO BEAUTIFUL NEWS



### Emmy Nomination

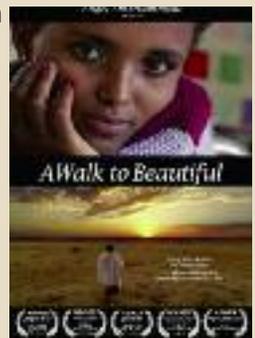
The masterful film "A Walk to Beautiful" has just received an Emmy nomination in the category of Outstanding Informational Programming, along with Public Television's NOVA. Stay tuned during the awards ceremony on Sunday, September 20th.

### Global Health Council – Best in Media Award

The film won the Global Health Council's 2009 Excellence in Media Award, receiving the prize at a gala dinner in Washington, DC at the Council's annual meeting. The film was nominated by Foundation Executive Director, Kate Grant who was delighted to see the film's Executive Producer, Steve Engel, receive the award on behalf of the production team.

### New DVD Available

Engel Entertainment has made a new version of the film available on DVD. The new version includes interviews with film producers and health experts and additional footage from the film. To learn more go to [www.walktobeautiful.com](http://www.walktobeautiful.com)



# Sneak Preview

We are proud to share with you an ad we are sponsoring in a special edition of the New York Times Magazine devoted to Empowering Women. The issue will be published on Sunday, August 23rd. It will feature an excerpt from Nick Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn's new book, *Half the Sky*, which is described as "a call to arms against our era's most pervasive human rights violation – the oppression of women in the developing world".

It is important to note that Nsimire and her story are real and was provided to us by our grantee, the Panzi Hospital in Democratic Republic of Congo.

16 year old Nsimire endured hours of agonizing labor... the baby died...but her nightmare wasn't over.



Photo: John Paul Doguin

Nsimire went into labor without medical help. That labor left her incontinent with an obstetric fistula – a common injury for women with unrelieved obstructed labor.

The good news: Nsimire got the curative surgery she desperately needed at the Panzi Hospital in the Democratic Republic of Congo by the dedicated team headed by Dr. Denis Mukwege, and funded by the Fistula Foundation

Tragically, the World Health Organization estimates two to three million women suffer with untreated fistulas, for want of surgery that would transform their lives. We're working hard to help more women like Nsimire. Learn how you can sponsor a life-transforming surgery for only \$450.

*"Just about the worst thing that can happen to a teenage girl in this world is to develop an obstetric fistula that leaves her trickling bodily wastes, stinking and shunned by everyone around her."*

— Nicholas D. Kristof  
Pulitzer Prize Winner

 The FISTULA FOUNDATION

*from despair to dignity*

[www.fistulafoundation.org](http://www.fistulafoundation.org)

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*"The 4-Star rating granted to the Foundation by Charity Navigator as well as its responsible, effective expenditure of resources strongly influenced Dining for Women's choice to sponsor the Foundation. Dining for Women sponsors only fiscally responsible programs that allocate at least 75% of their expenditures to program support. Dining for Women admires the powerful work that the Fistula Foundation continues to do and looks forward to following the Foundation's progress."*

~Devon Anker, Dining for Women

