



Transformations

News from Fistula Foundation, Summer 2013

IN THIS ISSUE

Page 2 | One Woman's Story

Page 2 | Supporter Spotlight: Mothers' Day Movement

Page 3 | Your Donations at Work

Page 4 | Fistula Foundation Joins International Community at Women Deliver

Page 4 | Supporter Spotlight: Raise for Women Challenge

Page 5 | Key Fistula Partners Convene in London

Page 6 | Obstetric Fistula: No Longer A Neglected Tragedy

Page 7 | Supporter Spotlight: Priti Khanal

Page 8 | Recommended Reading



Women waiting to be seen at Panzi Hospital.

Photo credit: © Paula Allen / V-Day

Healing Fistula in the Democratic Republic of Congo

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is a country of some 67 million citizens located in the heart of Africa, where it is the second largest country on the continent. The eastern regions lay claim to decades of conflict and warfare that have destabilized the entire country, brutalizing the lives of women in the process. This violence is reflected in the complete disruption of access to healthcare when a pregnant woman goes into labor.

Accordingly, many health centers in eastern DRC now include "delivered in the forest" on health care screening questionnaires, because so many women give birth while fleeing from rebels and government forces alike.

Women in the eastern region of the DRC have a very high risk of obstructed labor, which can cause them to develop obstetric fistula. Women with fistula who finally make their way to a fistula repair center often report that they wish they had died in labor, so awful is every waking and sleeping moment of their lives with fistula: abandoned, constantly filthy, constantly reeking, hungry, lonely and utterly poor.



Panzi Hospital.

continued on page 7

Uganda: One Woman's Story

Rebecca lives in the Soroti region of Uganda. She was still in school when she became pregnant. When her parents learned the news, they sent her away to live with the boy (the father) and his family, who did not treat her well.

When Rebecca was eight months pregnant, the boy's family decided that she should return home, to her own family. So she did.

Soon, Rebecca went into labor. She pushed and pushed, but there was no movement. Her labor was excruciating and lasted for four long days, during which she begged her family to take her to the hospital. "Wait, wait," they told her, denying her pleas. After all, women in this region typically gave birth at home, and hospitals were very expensive and often a last resort.

Four days later – eight days after her labor began – Rebecca's family took her to the hospital, where doctors delivered a stillborn baby. She soon learned

that her nightmare was not over: the constant pressure had created an obstetric fistula, and Rebecca had begun to leak urine.

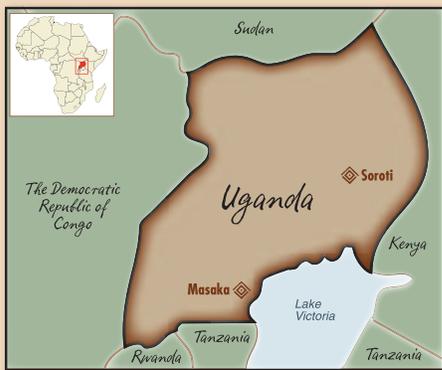
She lived with fistula for five years before she met an outreach worker from TERREWODE, a Fistula Foundation partner that provides fistula treatment services and a range of other programs to help improve the livelihood and status of women in Uganda. The outreach worker explained to Rebecca that her injury was treatable, and helped to arrange a free fistula repair surgery for her.

Rebecca received her free surgery and is now cured, happy and healthy once again.



Rebecca* is a fistula survivor who lives in Uganda

*Name changed to protect patient privacy.



Supporter Spotlight: Mothers' Day Movement

MOTHERS' DAY MOVEMENT
Make Mother's Day Meaningful

Day celebrations for items like flowers, cards and meals, they were astonished. They founded the Mothers' Day Movement to encourage all of us to rethink our giving priorities each Mother's Day, and to move the apostrophe to make the day a Mothers' Day, which honors all mothers. Every year, a different organization is selected and featured as the recipient of that year's charitable giving campaign, and Fistula Foundation was honored to be selected as the featured nonprofit of 2013.

As a result of their tireless fundraising efforts – and the generosity of donors like you – the Mothers' Day Movement was able to raise \$60,000 throughout the month of May. All funds raised through their campaign support the work of expert fistula surgeon, Dr. Steve Arrowsmith, in training fistula surgeons to complete advanced cases of fistula repair. By working directly with Fistula Foundation partners and their in-house surgeons, Dr. Arrowsmith will help build critical skills – and even more importantly, help expand the field so more qualified surgeons are able to conduct repairs, reducing the waiting period for women who need treatment.

The Mothers' Day Movement began with a small group of women who were inspired by the book *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*, by journalists Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn. After learning how much was spent annually in the United States on Mother's

Photo courtesy of the Mothers' Day Movement



L to R: Eva Hausman, Carol Mondschein, Kim Athan, Trish Hazelwood, Sara Allard, Stephanie Norton

YOUR DONATIONS AT WORK

Photo courtesy of Dr. Tareq Salahuddin



Bangladesh

Fistula Foundation donor funds were used to send expert fistula surgeon Dr. Steve Arrowsmith to **Bangladesh** in May to work with the Hope Foundation for Women and Children of Bangladesh. Dr. Arrowsmith provided advanced fistula training to the resident surgeon

at Hope Hospital for Women and Children in Cox's Bazar, and a fistula camp was held to treat more patients while Dr. Arrowsmith was in the country. Treacherous weather and social unrest related to the Rana Plaza building collapse prevented a number of women from reaching the camp, but 18 women were able to receive life-transforming surgeries during this camp.

Angola

Dr. Arrowsmith also visited the Evangelical Medical Center of Lubango (CEML) in Lubango, **Angola** this spring, performing fistula repair surgeries and providing advanced fistula skills training to a young surgeon at CEML. 25 women received fistula treatment during this visit.



Photo courtesy of Dr. Steve Arrowsmith



Uganda

Fistula Foundation funds supported installation of a safe medical waste disposal unit at Kitovu Hospital in Masaka, **Uganda**. Funds are also being used to provide ancillary care to fistula patients, helping to fund their hospital transportation, lodging, food and post-surgical care.

Nigeria

The Evangel Vesico-Vaginal Fistula Center in Jos, **Nigeria**, reports that Fistula Foundation funds have allowed them to treat 110 women suffering from obstetric fistula. While on track to complete 220 fistula surgeries in 2013, the Center reiterated that the need for fistula surgeries in the region still far outweighs the resources available to offer treatment.



Photo courtesy of Dr. Lawrence William



Fistula Foundation Joins International Community at Women Deliver

Women Deliver is a global advocacy organization that brings together voices from around the world to call for action to improve the health and well-being of girls and women. Convening in 2007 and continuing every three years, Women Deliver hosts a self-titled conference that brings together leaders, activists, researchers, policymakers and royalty to discuss research, trends, best practices and more. Fistula Foundation was present at the 2013 conference, along with a number of our partners.

The 2013 conference was the largest to date, drawing more than 4,500 attendees representing 2,200 organizations from 149 countries around the world. Featured speakers included Melinda Gates, UNFPA Executive Director Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin, Chelsea Clinton, Barbara Bush, several current and former heads of state, as well as crown princesses – all of whom are committed to empowering and improving the health of women and girls worldwide.

Women Deliver tackled three main issues: panelists discussed how investments in girls and women result in positive outcomes locally and internationally, considered paths toward easing the unmet global need for family planning, and engaged the audience in conversations about developing an action plan for prioritizing girls and women as the global community moves forward.

Obstetric fistula was highlighted at a number of sessions, and remains an important piece of the work in which organizations focused on maternal health are



Photo credit: Dr. Tareq Salahuddin

Pictured: Lindsey Pollaczek of Direct Relief, a long term Fistula Foundation partner, and Jessica Love of Fistula Foundation.

engaging as the global development community approaches the 2015 deadline for reaching the Millennium Development Goals. These eight goals were crafted and agreed upon by the world's countries and development institutions, and are designed to work as a blueprint for meeting the needs of the world's poorest citizens.

Supporter Spotlight: Raise for Women Challenge



Fistula Foundation recently participated in the Raise for Women Challenge, a fundraising campaign launched by The Huffington Post, Skoll Foundation and the Half the Sky Movement, that was designed to draw attention to women's issues like ours. Participating organizations had one goal: to raise the most money over the course of the campaign in order to win part of an additional \$75,000 in bonus donations, which was made available to the top three finishers. Thanks to incredibly generous donations from supporters like you, Fistula Foundation was able to raise \$40,699, putting us in 9th place – not bad at all for an overall pool of 122 organizations! We are incredibly thankful to those of you who donated via this campaign and who created fundraising campaigns of your own to help us in this challenge.



Key Fistula Partners Convene in London

This April, London-based FIGO (International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics) hosted a meeting of key partners to advance the goals of the FIGO Fistula Surgery Training Fellowship Program. Fistula Foundation and Johnson & Johnson are key sponsors of the program, which is designed to train surgeons from developing countries in fistula repair surgery.

The biggest single obstacle to increasing treatment for the vast number of women with fistula is the lack of effectively trained surgeons. The FIGO program is the first of its kind to thoroughly address this problem. The core of the program is the first-ever Global Competency-based Training Manual. Fistula Foundation Board Member, Dr. Suzy Elneil, authored and edited the manual, and is using it for FIGO "Train-the-Trainer" meetings. Fellows are carefully selected from developing countries through a rigorous process and then trained at accredited training centers in Africa. While there is a tremendous need for more fistula surgeons, FIGO's program has stepped in to help meet the problem head on.



Fistula Foundation Board Of Directors

CHAIR

Kassahun Kebede

DIRECTORS

France Donnay, MD

Sohier Elneil, MD

Kate Grant (ex-officio)

Sarah Omega Kidangasi
Stephen Saunders, Esq.

Robert Tessler, Esq.

Linda Tripp

Teri Whitcraft

Larry William, MD

Susan Wilson



Front row, L to R: *Ms. Patricia English, FIGO Project Director*
Dr. Suzy Elneil, Author of the Global Competency-Based Fistula Surgery Training Manual
Ms. Kate Grant, CEO, Fistula Foundation
 Back row, L to R: *Dr. Hamid Rushwan, CEO, FIGO*
Lord Naren Patel, Chair, Committee for Fistula, FIGO
Mr. Denis Robson, Director of African Affairs, Johnson & Johnson
Dr. Tom Raasen, Incoming President, International Society of Fistula Surgeons
Dr. Sinan Khaddaj, Secretary General, Women and Health Alliance International
Dr. Kees Waaldijk, Outgoing President, International Society of Fistula Surgeons

We're Helping Women In:

- Afghanistan
- Angola
- Bangladesh
- Chad
- Congo
- Ethiopia
- Guinea
- Kenya
- Nepal
- Niger
- Nigeria
- Pakistan
- Senegal
- Somalia
- Somaliland
- Sudan
- Tanzania
- Uganda
- Zambia

Fistula Foundation Chief Executive Officer Kate Grant wrote this article exclusively for the *Huffington Post*, published on 5/23/2013

Obstetric Fistula: No Longer A Neglected Tragedy

In September of 1994, the world community gathered in Cairo for the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). It was the largest intergovernmental conference on population and development ever held, producing a comprehensive Programme of Action that remains today as both touchstone and framework for the field. Yet in all 194 pages of that landmark document — which covers everything from female empowerment to male responsibilities in family planning — the childbirth injury obstetric fistula is not mentioned. Not once.

Obstetric fistula is a profound traumatic injury that's been ruining the lives of would-be mothers throughout history; the first historical occurrence recorded dates back to 2050 B.C. It's an injury that affects women like 16-year old Goni, from Ethiopia, who labored for days until her stillborn baby was delivered, and was then left incontinent until surgery years later could heal her wounds. Yet, until a decade ago, fistula was literally not on the global health agenda, even though it is arguably the most devastating and disabling of all childbirth injuries.

The simple reason: women who suffer from fistula live almost exclusively in rural areas of very resource constrained countries, and are therefore some of the least empowered human beings on the planet. Obstetric fistula impacts almost no one in the developed world since it was largely eradicated a century ago when access to emergency obstetric care became widespread.

Nearly two decades after the ICPD, the world has come together to create a global, multi-sector response to this previously neglected scourge, and now the tide is turning. To both commemorate progress and inspire future efforts, the United Nations General Assembly has proclaimed today, May 23rd, as the first annual **International Day to End Obstetric Fistula**.

This date is particularly fitting because it's been a decade since the **United Nations** launched its **Campaign to End Fistula**, helping strengthen the visibility of the issue and increase collaboration and coordination amongst doctors, hospitals, advocates and governments. Large bilateral donors, such as **USAID's** funded Fistula Care program at Engender Health, have provided critical policy and research leadership. Further, a nascent organization, the International Society of Fistula Surgeons, was formed in 2007 to advance

the practice of fistula surgery, a field that draws specialists from obstetrics, gynecology, general surgery and urology.

The International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics, in partnership with **UNFPA**, has pioneered both a training manual and a field-based fellowship training program. These multinational, bilateral and medical community efforts have proven critical to providing leadership, assessing need and injecting data into a field where little existed before, and distributing government resources where they are needed most.

The private sector fills the last crucial piece of the fistula treatment equation. Nongovernmental organizations, such as the **Fistula Foundation**, are advocating on behalf of fistula patients and forging relationships with corporate and individual donors to raise and subsequently distribute funds that expand the capacity for treatment at facilities in Africa and Asia.

In response to the vast need and growing awareness, generous donors have stepped forward to help the Fistula Foundation expand dramatically in the last four years, now supporting treatment sites in 19 countries. As donors in the United States and Europe learn about the issue, coffers to fund treatment have swelled.

Organizations like ours also fill a role in increasing the capacity of hospitals, through injections of critical funding for surgeries and training by expert surgeons to help provide fistula treatment where none was available before. **Direct Relief** provided key leadership in working with us and UNFPA to pioneer the first Global Fistula Map, a dynamic tool that provides information on treatment facilities around the world.

Several leading private sector corporations have also stepped forward to fund and support fistula treatment and prevention efforts, but none with greater resolve and dedication than **Johnson & Johnson**. The company has provided significant funds and supplies for fistula treatment, and been a strategic partner with our Foundation helping get critical funds to advance treatment in under-resourced communities. In addition, internet powerhouse **Google** has given in-kind advertising on its network to the Fistula Foundation to help expand awareness and fund our operation.

The media has taken notice as well, creating awareness of fistula among citizens and potential



Fistula Foundation representatives attend a reception to celebrate the first-ever International Day to End Obstetric Fistula at the United Nations. Pictured (L-R): Fistula Foundation Board member Dr. Suzy Elneil, Deputy Director Anne Ferguson and CEO Kate Grant.

donors, where little existed before. Two-time Pulitzer Prize winning journalist Nicholas Kristof at *The New York Times* elevated the issue through numerous columns that brought the stories of women with fistula and the doctors that treat them to the attention of his readers. His bestselling book, "Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide" (published with his Pulitzer Prize-winning wife, Sheryl WuDunn), devoted a section to fistula. Further, Oprah Winfrey featured the work of pioneering fistula surgeon and founder of the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital, Dr. Catherine Hamlin, on two of her programs.

We have a long way to go to provide treatment to the enormous backlog of women with untreated fistula, let alone provide the emergency obstetric care needed to prevent the injury. But while there is no silver bullet to solving this global problem, our coordinated response is making headway.

We must continue to fight for the women who have been traumatically injured while trying to bring a child into the world. They need our help to regain their place in their families, their communities and their societies.

Kate Grant is CEO of the Fistula Foundation, a nonprofit that works to end the suffering caused by the childbirth injury of obstetric fistula. Follow the organization online on Twitter and on Facebook.

Healing Fistula in the Democratic Republic of Congo *(continued from page 1)*

The highest rates of fistula in the DRC can be found in South Kivu Province, where one of Fistula Foundation's longest term partners, Panzi Hospital, is providing treatment for women with fistula and a multitude of other conditions. Panzi Hospital was founded by Dr. Denis Mukwege – a tireless advocate for victims of sexual violence and contender for the Nobel Peace Prize. The facility has been providing fistula repair surgeries since 2005.

Since 2009, Fistula Foundation funding has allowed Panzi Hospital to provide top-notch fistula care to women at both the hospital and at a series of outreach clinics. These clinics are part of the Panzi

Fistula Project, which sends surgeons to local health centers up to 1,000 kilometers away from Panzi, so women with fistula can receive surgeries closer to home. Surgeons travel for two weeks at a time, 8-10 times per year, typically operating on 30-50 patients at each outreach site.

Photo courtesy of Dr. Lawrence William



A fistula patient recovers at Panzi Hospital.

In 2012, hundreds of women underwent life-restoring fistula surgery within this Panzi system thanks to generous support from Fistula



Photo courtesy of Dr. Lawrence William

Fistula surgeons operate at Panzi Hospital.

Foundation donors. Funding was also used to send fistula surgeon Dr. Lauri Romanzi to Panzi Hospital for three weeks this spring to participate in a fistula teaching program. She gave lectures, performed fistula repair surgeries on 21 women, and helped the staff build organizational capacity by updating patient registries and databases and making improvements to hospital procedures.

Donor funds given to Fistula Foundation will continue to support Panzi Hospital and Congolese women, helping surgeons to increase the number of fistula patients treated, regardless of where they live, and ensuring that each woman has the best possible chance of success for her fistula repair, no matter the severity of her injury.

Photo courtesy of Half the Sky Movement



Priti Khanal poses for a photo with staff of the Half the Sky Movement in NYC.

Supporter Spotlight: Priti Khanal

Everyone who knows Priti Khanal of Jersey City, NJ, knows that her birthday party is always going to be an impressive celebration. And that's why everyone who knows Priti was intrigued when she told them what she wanted to do for her 27th birthday: give it up in support of Fistula Foundation.

Priti has been a supporter of Fistula Foundation for years. She first learned about obstetric fistula in high school, and the injury and the suffering it causes made a deep impression on her. Priti is a vocal advocate for women's health and reproductive rights issues, and has done a great deal to educate others about obstetric fistula, including holding screenings of the

documentary "A Walk to Beautiful" to raise awareness about fistula among her friends and family. But this year, she wanted to do more. So, she gave up her birthday.

She set out to raise \$2,700 for her 27th birthday – a lofty goal that she came a long way toward meeting. Priti told friends and family about her idea one month ahead of her January 30 birthday, and asked them to contribute what they would have spent on the cost of a subway ticket and a birthday cocktail, had she thrown a birthday party instead. She actively campaigned on social media sites like Twitter and Facebook, and by the end of her two month drive, she had raised more than \$1,600 for Fistula Foundation! And she's not stopping there: she plans to give up her next birthday for fistula, too, pledging to meet her original \$2,700 goal.

While her next birthday won't arrive until January 30, 2014, you can help Priti meet her goal by visiting her birthday fundraiser at crowdrise.com/TeamTheFistulaFoundation/fundraiser/pritikhanal

◆ The FISTULA FOUNDATION

Help give a woman a new life

1900 The Alameda, Suite 500

San Jose, CA 95126

Tel: 408-249-9596

Toll Free: 866-756-3700

Fax: 408-244-7328

info@fistulafoundation.org

www.fistulafoundation.org

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
SAN JOSE, CA
PERMIT NO. 161

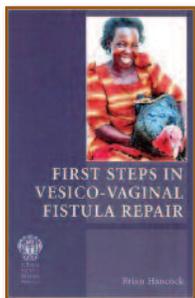
RECOMMENDED READING

First Steps in Vesico-Vaginal Fistula Repair

Renowned fistula surgeon Dr. Brian Hancock has published an update of his popular *First Steps in Vesico-Vaginal Fistula Repair*, a fistula care guide for novice surgeons and general fistula care workers. The book was developed to help newly trained surgeons recognize simple cases of obstetric fistula. It provides step-by-step instructions on how to repair the injury, as well as guidance for postoperative care.

Copies of this publication, and of other fistula care documents, can be viewed for free online. For a direct link to download this resource, visit:

<http://www.fistulafoundation.org/whatisfistula/fistulalinks.html>



The Good in Bed Guide to Pelvic Organ Prolapse

Fistula Foundation partner surgeon Dr. Lauri Romanzi is a urogynecologist and reconstructive pelvic surgeon who provides training and performs fistula repair surgeries at a number of Fistula Foundation partner sites in Africa and Asia. She also conducts surgeries to heal women suffering from uterine prolapse, a condition in which a woman's uterus slips down into or protrudes from her vagina. Like fistula, prolapse can carry a great stigma. To demystify the injury, Dr. Romanzi has released a new e-book on the topic, *The Good in Bed Guide to Pelvic Organ Prolapse*. Already downloaded by hundreds, the book provides clear and straightforward information about the condition and treatment options. This e-book is available for download to Kindle, Nook and iBook readers at www.goodinbed.com.

