



WORLDWIDE FISTULA FUND
PARTNERSHIP TO END CHILDBIRTH INJURIES

Impact Report 2024

Impact by the
Numbers

Building Capacity
in 5 Countries

Donor Spotlight

Survivors' Success



Our Mission

To protect and restore the health and dignity of the world's most vulnerable women by preventing and treating devastating childbirth injuries.

What we do

We utilize a Four Pillar Model of action to address childbirth injuries: intensive patient outreach, expert surgeries, social-economic empowerment & advocacy training, prevention outreach. Protecting women's health and restoring women's lives after injuries goes beyond surgical treatment.

How we do it

WFF partners with local leaders and organizations in low-resource countries to increase their own capacity to address women's maternal health needs. Our partners embrace our Four Pillar Model of action.



May Rose Keller
WFF Chair

MESSAGE FROM WFF CHAIR & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Supporters,

Developing local leadership in partner countries is where Worldwide Fistula Fund excels and we are very proud of how much we have accomplished to date. Thanks to your support we have made considerable impact in 5 countries – details in the next pages. This Impact Report highlights how far our WFF country leaders and their NGOs have come, from humble beginnings.

WFF's partnership model –combining mentorship with general operating funds – showcases partners that continue to alleviate suffering and grow their impact in women's lives. We encourage and foster new funding relationships for our grantees to reduce their dependence on us. As part of our Strategic Plan, we look forward to identifying and partnering with new local leaders in the coming years.

Sincerely,
Mary Rose and Soja



Soja Orlowski
Executive Director



YOUR IMPACT



1,874,000+

Community members reached with Prevention & Treatment messaging



5,400+

Free Surgeries



3,460+

Survivors reintegrated back into their communities



3,300+

Small Businesses run by Survivors for economic empowerment



4,320+

Surgeries by Urogynecology Fellows since 2016



1,640+

Doctors, Residents, Nurses, & medical professionals trained



What is a Fistula?

80-90% of the women we serve suffer from an obstetric fistula.

An obstetric fistula is a hole between the vagina and rectum or vagina and bladder, through which urine or feces leaks uncontrollably. It usually develops after two or more days of prolonged, obstructed labor and pressure from the baby has compressed and killed soft tissue against the mother's pelvic bones. In 90% of obstetric fistula cases, the baby dies.

A woman with an obstetric fistula suffers isolation, rejection, and humiliation.

“

Fistula is treatable as well as preventable. When we sensitize our communities about safe motherhood, we are not only preventing fistula, but we are also addressing other childbirth-related complications and death.

-Mwajuma, Kenya

Holistic Model

Four Pillars of Action

In sub-Saharan Africa, societal ignorance of childbirth injury causes, treatment availability, and prevention contribute to a woman's prolonged suffering, feelings of rejection and shame. Treatment goes beyond surgery and may require physical therapy. Social reintegration may include counseling, basic literacy and credit & savings education, economic empowerment, and Solidarity Groups. Survivors are eager to prevent the suffering of other women. Our reintegration programs provide advocacy training for patient outreach and community prevention messaging to spread the word.

Our local partners embrace this Four Pillar Holistic Model to address all the obstacles to protecting and restoring the health of women by preventing and treating childbirth injury.



1

Rural Patient
Outreach



2

Quality Surgical
Treatment by Skilled
Surgeons



3

Social Reintegration:
Vocational Training,
Health Education,
Solidarity Groups



4

Community
Prevention
Education



DONOR SPOTLIGHT

Julie Hamos – WFF supporter since 2012

“I am a committed, monthly WFF donor because I don't think women should suffer preventable, treatable childbirth injuries just because they are poor.

I have been a Worldwide Fistula Fund supporter since 2012. As a former Illinois State Legislator and having devoted my life to ensuring the most vulnerable can access healthcare services, I appreciate what WFF does on a global scale.

Eunice Reclaims Her Life

“

I was welcomed into a Solidarity Group where I was glad to meet fellow fistula survivors.

- Eunice, Kenya

In Bungoma County, Kenya, Eunice was delivering her third child when she developed a devastating fistula. She suffered continuous, uncontrollable incontinence and as a result was ostracized by her community. Deeply ashamed, she led a secluded life with her children.

Eunice struggled with her condition for 3 long years. Then, she met fistula survivor Florence, who introduced her to Let's End Fistula Initiative (LEFI), WFF's Kenyan partner. Eunice embarked on her journey of healing and recovery with the support of LEFI's Cheptais Solidarity Group. She regained her physical health and a renewed sense of purpose and hope.



Eunice started saving money and opened a small business baking bread. She used her LEFI Financial Skills Training to grow her “bakery” into a local eatery. Motivated by her success, Eunice took a small loan from her Solidarity Group to open a dry goods store and establish herself as the main supplier of beans in her community. Eunice was also able to purchase chickens, goats and some land for herself and her four children!

Eunice is grateful to LEFI and her Solidarity Group. They helped her transformation from a place of despair to one filled with hope and possibilities.



Country Partners

Burkina Faso, Ethiopia
Kenya, Niger, Uganda

We believe solving global problems such as devastating childbirth injuries requires a commitment to collaborate with, support, and develop local leaders.

Our Strategic Plan includes mentoring all current grantees to develop new funding resources to increase capacity and reduce WFF dependence while identifying new country leaders for partnership.



PARTNERSHIP TO END CHILDBIRTH INJURIES

Building Capacity

In 5 African Countries



ETHIOPIA

College of Health Sciences at Mekelle University (MU), Ayder Comprehensive Specialist Hospital (ACSH)

Accredited WFF medical training programs are administered through Mekelle University in Ethiopia. As a Fulbright Scholar, WFF Founder Dr. Lewis Wall, spent 7 months of 2014 at MU identifying medical training gaps. Under his leadership and in collaboration with Board Members Dr. Spitznagle and Dr. Nardos, WFF developed high quality medical education programs at Mekelle University to advance health equity in northern Ethiopia. All programs were funded by a remarkable \$550,000 gift from the Mike and Lynn Coatney Family Foundation Fund. We are grateful and proud to share our accomplishments with this 2013-2023 investment.

Many programs grew out of our annual **Mekelle Medical Education Collaboration** conferences (2013-19, MMEC) which “trained the trainers” to assume leadership after WFF’s investment phase ended.

Our MMEC conferences supported development of the **Ob-Gyn Residency Program** (2013-19) which is ongoing. Specialized training and services developed at the **Gestational Trophoblastic Disease Center** (2015-19) have been moved under the Ob-Gyn department. **Physical Therapy Bachelor’s and Master’s degree programs** (2017-23) developed by Dr. Spitznagle are now primarily taught by graduates (12), one of whom was named PT Clinical Director at ACSH. **ICU-Critical Care training** (2018-19) has developed into ICU Director Dr Ataklti’s oversight of medical and surgical ICUs.

Our investment in Ethiopia’s first **Urogynecology Fellowship Program** (2016-23), launched in partnership with Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia, Maternal Health Fund and Oregon Health & Science University, has had the most profound impact on female pelvic medicine in the region. Seven (7) graduates to date have completed 4,300+ procedures during training and have since returned to their institutions with advanced surgical skills. These graduates exponentially increase women’s healthcare capacity in Ethiopia while training new Fellows.

Both the 2020 pandemic and 2020-2022 Tigray war posed disruptions, but WFF is proud to remain a partner as all programs continue - *under Ethiopian leadership*.



BURKINA FASO



Dr. Itengre Ouedraogo, ARENA Founder, International Federation of Gynecology & Obstetrics (FIGO) Certified Fistula Surgeon Trainer, International Society of Obstetric Fistula Surgeons (ISOFS) Executive Secretary

WFF is proud of our ongoing, 12+ year partnership with Dr. Itengre and his development as a leader. We trained Dr. Itengre as a FIGO Certified Fistula Surgeon from 2012-2013 while he began his service as Chief Medical Officer at Danja Fistula Center in Niger. In 2017, he returned home to Burkina Faso and launched ARENA. He delivered holistic fistula care with multiple local partners until 2022 when he opened ARENA Medical Center, a 25 bed dedicated childbirth injury center providing medical training and with space for 30 survivors to receive education/Reintegration services. With encouragement from WFF, Dr. Itengre has developed new funding partnerships for hospital construction, additional operating funds, medical supplies and equipment, and consulting fees to train fistula surgeons.

Highlight: Dr. Itengre is currently conducting fistula survivor impact research comparing services through multiple local partners vs. under one roof at ARENA, which we expect to showcase superior outcomes for fistula survivors served through ARENA's dedicated fistula center.

532,850	Community members reached with Prevention & Treatment messaging
593	Doctors, Residents, Nurses, & medical professionals trained
484	Free Surgeries
451	Survivors reintegrated back into their communities
265	Small Businesses run by fistula survivors for economic empowerment

“

Today I have 6 apprentices and can take care of myself and my family's expenses.

Kiekieta - Tailor, Burkina Faso



KENYA

Sarah Omega, Founder and Executive Director,
Let's End Fistula Initiative (LEFI)

Our ongoing, 6-year partnership with LEFI, led by fistula survivor Sarah Omega, empowers women through Solidarity Groups for mutual support in social reintegration and economic empowerment after surgical treatment. Prior to WFF's partnership, Seattle's One by One and LEFI provided 1000+ free fistula surgeries and in 2017 launched 11 Solidarity Groups to support 200 women with Reintegration and Empowerment programs. Under WFF, LEFI has converted to an independent NGO, multiplied empowerment services to 26 Groups for 500+ women, added Safe Motherhood injury prevention outreach activities for all Solidarity Groups, and launched new programs for school children.

Highlight: Young Champion Fistula Clubs (YCFC) were launched with 108 adolescent and teen members in 2021. In partnership with the Ministry of Health, the Clubs teach adolescents and teens from all regional schools how to reduce their childbirth injury risk & promotes education and economic independence over early marriage.

411,973	Community members and school children reached with Prevention & Treatment messaging
1,136	Small Businesses run by fistula survivors for economic empowerment
1,000	Free Surgeries
534	Survivors reintegrated back into their communities
108	Students in the Young Champions Fistula Club

UGANDA

Alice Emasu, Founder & Executive Director, Terrewode

Since 2010, WFF has been Alice and Terrewode's oldest, continuous funding partner and initially funded Alice's MSW research at Washington University in St. Louis on three African nations' fistula strategies. In 2019, Alice fulfilled her dream of opening the Terrewode Women's Community Hospital (TWCH) with multiple new construction funding partners and operating funds from WFF. With Terrewode's mission to create systemic change and inform the national strategy to address childbirth injuries, their 60+ Solidarity Groups have survivors advocating to the Ministry of Health for additional resources while Terrewode embraces the holistic model. Alice Emasu was recognized as the Washington Global Health Alliance's 2023 Luminary Leader.



840,000	Community members reached with Prevention & Treatment messaging
1,734	Free Surgeries
1,526	Survivors reintegrated back into their communities
1,373	Small Businesses run by fistula survivors for economic empowerment

Highlight: With the 2019 TWCH opening, all patients receive physical therapy as routine care with continuous program support and training provided by Dr. Tracy Spitznagle, WFF Board member and Professor of Physical Therapy at Washington University in St. Louis.



NIGER

Dr. Chelsea Porter, Chief Medical Officer, and
Dr. Ryan Porter, Director: Danja Fistula Center

WFF's longest partnership is with operating partner, SIM, since building the Danja Fistula Center (DFC), breaking ground in 2008. Opening in 2012, DFC is the finest fistula hospital in West Africa and addresses childbirth injuries with our holistic approach including physical therapy. Following a temporary pandemic closure in 2020 and with Drs. Chelsea and Ryan Porter named new Chief Medical Officer and Center Director, DFC is ramping back up toward a capacity of 250 surgeries annually. In partnership with the Niger Ministry of Health, Dr. Chelsea Porter anticipates providing fistula training to local surgeons in the future.

“

This trip really affirms the importance of the work we do. Some women never thought they could be cured. Now, here they are healed AND able to earn income with the skills we taught them!

Dr. Holly Richter, WFF Board Member

Highlights: Dr. Porter was accepted into the FIGO Fistula Surgeon certification training program and WFF Board Member and Urogynecologist, Dr. Holly Richter, travels to DFC for additional onsite training and mentorship.

90,000

Community members reached with Prevention & Treatment messaging

2,063

Free Surgeries

989

Survivors reintegrated back into their communities

300

Local health workers trained

TSAHARA'S STORY

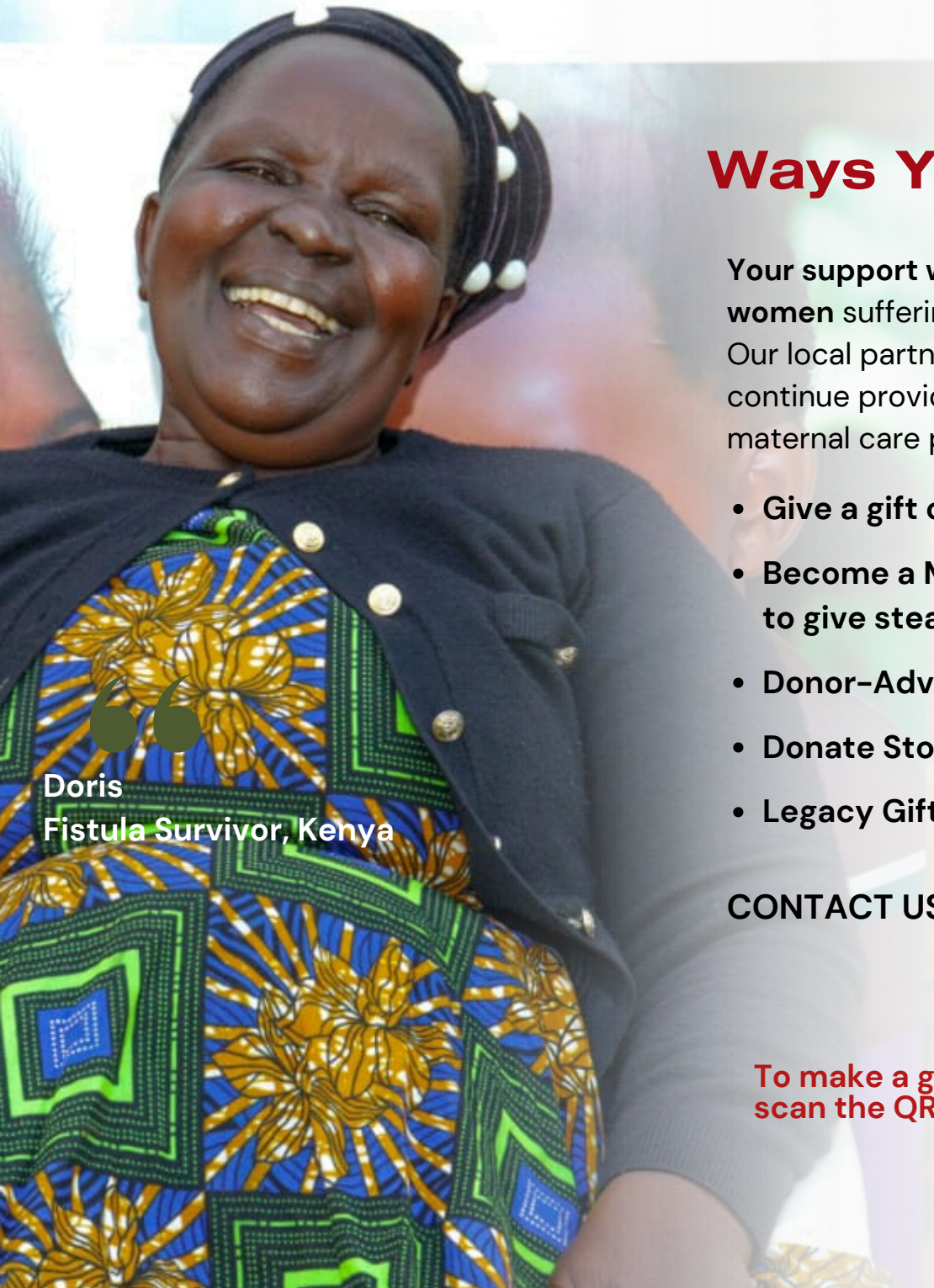
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At this hospital you can be cured.

Tsahara, Niger

Tsahara's complicated fistula required 3 surgeries. Not only did Tsahara heal physically, but also emotionally and mentally. She received support from other fistula survivors and learned to knit and use a sewing machine through DFC's Reintegration Program. Tsahara is excited and optimistic for her future.





“
Doris
Fistula Survivor, Kenya

Ways You Can Help

Your support will transform lives of women suffering with childbirth injuries. Our local partners need your support to continue providing desperately needed maternal care programs.

- **Give a gift online or by mail**
- **Become a Monthly Supporter to give steady support**
- **Donor-Advised Funds (DAFs)**
- **Donate Stock**
- **Legacy Gifts**

CONTACT US: soja@wffund.org

**To make a gift today,
scan the QR code**



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