



2009

Welcome to our third edition...
Help make a difference...

TRUSTEES MESSAGE

The Freedom from Fistula Foundation has three trustees, Ann H Gloag, Elizabeth (Liz) Tinto, and Lois Boyle. In this issue, Liz wanted to say a few words about the development of the Foundation over the past twelve months...

"I am delighted with the progress the charity has made in its first year and I am very happy with the way things have been run and organised. Not only have we raised substantial funding but we have spread the word about obstetric fistula to many people both in the UK and overseas. People have responded well to our projects and hopefully everyone will continue supporting us so we can make a difference to the lives of women in Africa who are suffering from fistula.

"I am also excited about the new "Hotline" service in Nairobi which will further expand our services to the ladies of Kenya. It has been a very successful year and I am glad to be part of the work we are doing for obstetric fistula."

THE TRAGEDY OF FISTULA

Today an estimated 2 million women in Africa are suffering serious damage both physically and mentally through vesico-vaginal fistulas (VVF), caused by obstructed childbirth. Rendered incontinent, sometimes doubly incontinent, these women are shunned by their families and communities and in many cases cast out of their villages. The tragedy is that surgical intervention can provide a positive solution.

In up to 90% of cases, fistula can be successfully surgically repaired, and most of those women who receive appropriate treatment can go on to have children, usually by caesarean section.



The Freedom From Fistula Foundation (FFFF) has been established to provide free surgeries for women who have been injured during labour due to lack of medical care and to help women throughout Africa receive healthcare during pregnancy and childbirth to prevent fistula from developing. Already we are working in 5 countries.

OUR SHARED VISION

The vision of the FFFF - "for all women in Africa to have access to healthcare during pregnancy and childbirth and to help eradicate obstetric fistulas" - and remember that ultimately 'The women we are helping are like you - mothers, daughters, cousins, wives, aunts, nieces.....'.

PATIENT PROFILE

At 23, Iye had already endured the death of two children but when she gave birth to her youngest child and developed fistula, unimaginably her life got even worse.

Although her baby survived, because of the smell and her inability to bear more children, her husband and family disowned her and she became destitute living on scraps from the jungle. She was then captured by rebels and became their slave for six months.

After 17 years a chance encounter led her to the clinic in Freetown, Sierra Leone. After her surgery she was so happy, she sang!



FUNDRAISING

There are lots of ways to involve people in raising funds for the Freedom From Fistula Foundation - whether it's choosing FFFF as your chosen charity when running a 10k, donating the proceeds from a coffee morning or holding a community event. If you are undertaking a fundraising challenge, an easy way to help us is to create your own page on www.justgiving.com which will allow people to donate online and help you manage your collections on our behalf.

'10 for 10'

The '10 for 10' initiative is a method of raising awareness and funds. The idea behind the scheme is that the message can be spread quickly and easily, woman to woman. A '10 for 10' hostess would organise an event, such as a coffee morning or a dinner, and invite 10 friends. During the event, each guest would be given an information pack and they would be shown the DVD presentation. Hopefully each guest would be inspired to become a hostess and agree to hold their own event and invite another 10 women... who then have an event and invite another 10 women...and so it goes on. Information packs are available from our Perth office and we can help you plan your event. We can also provide a speaker if you want to organise something a bit bigger than just for 10!

KENYA FOCUS

Ann Gloag recently returned from Kenya where the [Freedom From Fistula Foundation](#) launched its 'HOTLINE' service on 23rd July. The idea behind the 'HOTLINE' is to provide a 24/7 access number that women can call if they suspect that they have a fistula. The caller will be asked a few simple questions and then be given a date to come to our partner hospital, Jamaa in Nairobi, for screening. If a fistula is discovered then they will be given a date to return for an operation. We are using our existing resources to manage the project and we can also arrange transport to bring women to the hospital if required.

We have secured two telephone numbers from the main providers in Kenya, Zain and Safaricom, and are widely advertising them on four branded minibuses which are being used in and around Nairobi. By this simple system we hope that we can reach all the women in Kenya suffering from fistula and give them hope for change. We want to give access across the WHOLE country and into remote areas.

The 'HOTLINE' launch event was attended by Madam Ida Odinga and Miss Kenya, Ruth Kinuthia, and representatives from various women's groups, churches, businesses, and the Nairobi slums. Ann

Gloag did a number of TV, radio and press interviews around the launch to ensure wide publicity. Ann said, "I did a television interview on the morning of the launch and I was so excited to be talking about the event that when the interviewer asked me when the launch was happening I blurted out 'Today at noon at Kenya Children's Home on Langata Road'. By the time I arrived back at KCH my team approached me in a total panic – already two women with fistula had shown up at the gates! They were followed by some unexpected guests who had also seen the TV interview but I wanted them all to be involved so we invited them to stay and arranged for the ladies with fistula to see the doctor at the hospital. It was all a bit crazy but it shows the power of publicity – it really does get the word out!"



14 women were referred to Jamaa Hospital in the first five days, with three of them receiving their operations that week. Since then a further 104 have been referred and 56 more women have been repaired.



In addition to women calling the 'HOTLINE' directly, there have been lots of other enquiries including a gentleman in Western Kenya who has gathered 15 women with fistula through a Muslim group. The women's groups have held several meetings and leaflets have been distributed to over 300 people attending a midwife's conference.

Ann added, "Everyone is extremely happy with the progress that has been made and we hope to keep the momentum going and really make a dent in the fistula problem in Kenya."

FUNDRAISER PROFILE

The Tryst Patchwork Group from Edinburgh is a group of women who meet regularly to produce beautiful handmade quilts and wallhangings. At the end of March, the ladies hosted a Coffee Morning and 'Sale of Works'. A fabulous £1000 was raised and donated to FFFF. The ladies also submitted an article to the 'Popular Patchwork' magazine, thus raising awareness of the charity. We are extremely grateful for all their hard work and their pledge of continued support.

WILD ORGANICS™ SUPPORTING FFFF

'Blending wild organic ingredients with organic essential oils, Wild Organics™ products are free from harsh, moisture-stripping chemicals and are carefully created to treat your skin and our world with care and respect.'

The founder of Wild Organics™, Alan MacKenzie, describes why he is involved with FFFF, "In creating Wild Organics™ my other driving mission is to create a better life for women suffering unnecessarily in Africa. I went to Africa many years ago and was so moved by the suffering I saw that I've actively supported African charities ever since. As a proud partner of the [Freedom from Fistula Foundation](#), Wild Organics™ makes a real difference to the lives of women in the African continent." See for yourself at www.wildorganicsbeauty.com.



CONTACT US

Freedom From Fistula Foundation, Unit B1,
Highland House, St. Catherine's Road,
Perth, PH1 5RY.

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www.freedomfromfistula.org.uk