

Malawi Midwife Challenge Update



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FISTULA
Foundation

Making **life** worth **living**

Dear Rotarians

On behalf of everyone at the Freedom From Fistula Foundation, I would like to thank each and every one of you for your generous support of the Malawi Midwife Project and, in turn, the part you have played in securing Scotland's first multi-district Global Grant. Special thanks must go to the Rotary Club of Currie Balerno and, in particular, Mr Allan Maclaughlan for all the hard work in relation to the Global Grant application.

We plan to recruit the next class of trainee midwives in early 2014 – and they will be the first midwives funded through monies raised by Rotary Clubs across Scotland.

The process can take some time as it is important the right people are identified to undergo the training. Together with representatives from the Safe Motherhood Initiative (SMI), we seek to identify and recruit trainee midwives from some of the most rural areas so that, when their training is over, they can return to these areas and provide quality maternity care to women and girls when and where they need it most.

We have also been working closely with the Gates Foundation in Malawi to develop a Monitoring and Evaluation team to oversee the Midwife Training Project. Funded by the Gates Foundation and the Freedom From Fistula Foundation, we now have a team whose remit it is to ensure the smooth running of the project and ensure that the training offered is to the highest possible standard, thus ensuring that trainee midwives are properly equipped with the right skills, knowledge and experience when they complete their training and are deployed in the community. Jude Holden our Clinical Director (Africa) is overseeing the work of the team and we will tell you more about her work later in this newsletter.



In addition to our work with the midwife training programme, the last few months have been a busy time for the charity. On 23rd September we officially launched the Freedom From Fistula Foundation US in New York with more than 150 guests attending the event, including the Presidents of Liberia and Malawi.

Speaking at the event, Joyce Banda, President of Malawi, said, *“Ann Gloag and her team are transforming the lives of hundreds of women and girls every day in Malawi, Sierra Leone and Kenya and they deserve enormous credit for the work they do.”*

Sometimes it is easy for people to forget that the women and girls we are treating on a daily basis are just like us – mums, daughters, grannies, aunties, sisters, nieces. Isatu was one of our patients in Sierra Leone and her story, sadly not uncommon, highlights how important the need for improved maternity care is across Africa.

Your kindness and generosity in respect of the Malawi Midwife Project will undoubtedly help build the foundations for better maternity care in Malawi through the provision of well-skilled and properly trained Community Midwives working where the need is greatest. These midwives will help ensure that women and girls no longer have to suffer in silence but can access the care they require to turn their existence into a life worth living – **Thank you.**

Ann H Gloag OBE
Founder and Executive Chairman
Freedom From Fistula Foundation

ISATU'S STORY



Isatu arrived at the Aberdeen Women's Centre on New Years Eve 2011. The 18 year old was severely malnourished, dehydrated and suffered from infected wounds. Isatu had a double fistula following a tortuous 5 day labour and the death of her baby. She was unable to walk because the nerves in her legs were badly damaged. Over the next 9 months, our staff helped build up Isatu's strength through a tailored feeding programme, physiotherapy and expert wound care. During this healing process Isatu enjoyed the daily arts and crafts activities that are offered at the centre. Her first surgery took place in September when an expert surgeon was flown in to perform over 50 complicated surgeries. Her second surgery took place in early November and it was a huge success. Isatu went home, dry and full of hope for the future thanks to the dedication of the staff at the Aberdeen Women's Centre.

UPDATE FROM MALAWI

As Clinical Director (Africa) for the Freedom From Fistula Foundation, I oversee our projects across Sierra Leone, Malawi and Kenya. For the last few months I have been in Malawi developing and implementing the Monitoring and Evaluation programme for the students.

As you are aware, the training programme combines classroom based theory with practical training. One of the most important areas of the team's work is to assess the progress of the students and observe them in their clinical settings.

In November 2013 the team travelled to the north of Malawi to visit students from Ekwendeni College on their three month clinical placement. Students are spread across six health centres in the region and we visited four of these in remote areas – Kafakule, Luzon, Bwengu and Enuweni. These students are the first batch of trainees funded by Ann Gloag and the Freedom From Fistula Foundation.

We were pleased to see that all students appeared happy, healthy and well-presented and were able to submit an up-to-date record of clinical objectives achieved, including deliveries, in line with the standards and objectives set out by the Nursing & Midwifery Council of Malawi. Students were enthusiastic about their time on placement and peer group support was evident, appearing to play a critical part in the overall learning outcomes.

At Kafakule we met with a student who, with the support of the male tutor had just delivered twins – her first experience of this.

At Enuweni Health Centre which is well equipped, having been funded by outside funders and part of the Christian Health Association of Malawi, students were delighted to have a visit and eager to share their experiences.

The trip offered a valuable insight into the progress students are making. It also offered us the opportunity to see first hand the challenges faced - the lack of basic equipment in some of the most remote health centres, the logistical transport problems, and the need to provide further training in obstetric emergencies, particularly in areas where the number of deliveries is smaller and therefore first hand experience is less. We are now working with the organisations involved in the midwife training project to consider the best way of managing and indeed reducing these challenges.

This was the third time of visiting the students and it gave me a real impression of how all the modules of the course fit together. I have been very impressed by the commitment of students and standard of training and our team will continue to monitor and evaluate the programme and progress of students.

Jude Holden
Clinical Director (Africa)
Freedom From Fistula Foundation



THE NEXT STEP



The third key element to ensuring the success and sustainability of the Safe Motherhood Initiative, alongside education and the training of midwives, is the building of waiting shelters close to existing health centres. These hostel style buildings offer accommodation and cooking facilities so that women can come to the clinics for observation well in advance of their due date, thus reducing the number of maternal and neo-natal deaths and indeed the occurrence of obstetric fistula.

It has always been our intention to become involved in this element of the Initiative and as many of you know, through presentations given by Sue Hope, we had identified a site on which to build our first waiting shelter, in the grounds of Bwaila hospital.

Recently, however, it has become clear that a site on the outskirts of Lilongwe, which offers us the opportunity to convert an existing building rather than build from scratch, is more suitable. We are awaiting architectural drawings but would anticipate that the waiting shelter will be at least a 36 bed unit with appropriate cooking facilities and a living area. Crucially, this new site offers us the opportunity to incorporate a fully equipped operating theatre. As soon as the details have been finalised, we will be considering the most effective way of funding this project with a view to starting the conversion early in 2014.

Paul McNeil
Director of Operations & Human Resources
The Gloag Foundation

We will of course bring you news of further developments in due course. In the meantime, if you would like a speaker to come to your Club or would like further information about the project, please in the first instance, contact Sue Hope on 07702 812987 or sue@thehopeconsultancy.org.uk. For more information on the work of the Freedom From Fistula Foundation please visit our website.

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