



## 2022 Annual Report

### Freedom From Fistula

*Providing free healthcare, education and economic empowerment opportunities to*

**35,000** women and children in  
*Sierra Leone, Malawi and Madagascar*

Freedom From Fistula Foundation Inc  
350 Avenue of the Americas, Floor 2 Suite 266, New York, NY10019  
Tel 646-867-0994  
Email [info@freedomfromfistula.org](mailto:info@freedomfromfistula.org)  
Web [www.freedomfromfistula.org](http://www.freedomfromfistula.org)  
Registration number for 501c(3): 45-3541106







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Sierra Leone



Malawi



Madagascar







## MARIA'S STORY

MARIA HAS BEEN ABLE TO RETURN TO SCHOOL TO FULFIL HER DREAM OF BECOMING A NURSE THANKS TO FISTULA SURGERY

**Maria (17)** received fistula surgery at our Fistula Care Centre in Malawi in February 2022. We supported her return to school to finish her studies. Her dream is to become a nurse and help women and girls with the same fistula problem as her.

"I am thankful that my fistula problem has ended. I never thought this day would come, where I would sit down in a chair with no stress that I am going to wet it and have a urine smell on it. I am able to sit and be with my friends. Thank you."



5,478

**Babies** safely delivered



652

**Fistula surgeries** performed



60

**Teenage girls** attended our Skills Training Centre



172

**Sexual and Gender Based Violence** survivors provided with counseling & medical support



19,923

**Primary Healthcare** consultations provided to children aged 0-15



9,801

**Immunizations** given to protect children aged 0-15



4,301

Women provided with **family planning** counseling



894

**Economic empowerment** opportunities provided







"I must pay tribute to our Country Directors for helping us achieve our success, especially working in very challenging circumstances - be it natural disasters, health pandemics, skills shortages or corruption. Their perseverance on difficult days and dedication to our core value of 'patients first' is a crucial part of our success."



### A message from Dame Ann Gloag

2022 was a special year for Freedom From Fistula (FFF) as we helped a record number of women and children - more than 35,000!

15 years on from founding FFF I could not have imagined the scale of what we would achieve and it is thanks to our amazing staff and supporters.

Our fistula clinics are the **Centers of Excellence** in every country where we work and our commitment to the women and children of Sierra Leone, Malawi and Madagascar is recognized across the populations and political spectrum of each country.

I must pay tribute to our Country Directors for helping us achieve our success, especially working in very challenging circumstances – be it natural disasters, health pandemics, skills shortages or corruption. Their perseverance on difficult days and dedication to our core value of 'patients first' is a crucial part of our success.

It is heartwarming that our donors continue to partner with us every year and new donors are moved to join us. The ongoing support of all our donors is greatly appreciated by me personally and all our team. Without you, we could not continue to provide our **free services** to help more women and girls every year and we are committed to delivering the best value for money for your donations.

So far 2023 has been challenging as every country has been experiencing rampant inflation and significant increased cost of living, as well as some natural disasters, but we are optimistic and remain inspired by the stories of strength and resilience of our patients.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ann Gloag'.

**Founder, Freedom From Fistula**



Where we work  
and the people  
we serve

	Sierra Leone	Malawi	Madagascar	USA
Population	8,399,367	20,505,749	29,671,593	340,425,841
Life Expectancy (years)	56.8	68.8	69.9	79.7
Maternal mortality (deaths per 100,000)	1360	349	335	32.9
Deaths under age of 5 (per 1,000 live births)	96.3	43.7	34.1	5.8

Source Worldometers.info 1950-2023







# Fistula

In April we had an exciting day at the Aberdeen Women's Centre (AWC), after finishing a two-week **fistula camp**, where **32** successful operations took place to heal women of their obstetric fistula.



To celebrate our patients' transition to their new life, we held our traditional **Gladi Gladi ceremony**, with drums, cake, dancing and singing. All patients received a new African dress and the teenage mothers from our Skills Training Centre came to do everyone's hair and make-up on this joyous day.



In August we had a large number of fistula patients return to AWC for a check-up. Our patient follow up officer has been doing an amazing job tracing patients who have undergone surgery. This has been a challenge in the past, so we were delighted to welcome back so many ladies and check the surgery remained successful and none were experiencing issues. All were well and soon returned home.

We performed **652**  
fistula surgeries and  
**108** gynecology  
surgeries

125

in Sierra Leone

253

in Malawi

274

in Madagascar

108

Gynecology surgeries





# Sierra Leone

At our **Aberdeen Women's Centre (AWC)** in Sierra Leone most of our fistula patients come from rural areas and have never had the opportunity to attend school.



We use their time at AWC for basic education. We have literacy lessons, where they learn the alphabet and how to write their name, as well as teaching basic numeracy.

It can be challenging for our teacher as many of our patients only speak their tribal language but patients and nurses work together to help translate.

We also teach our fistula patients how to become patient ambassadors. We provide knowledge about fistula which will, in turn, help them educate women in their communities and provide counselling to encourage the sharing of their heart breaking and very personal stories.



## **A fun day at the beach: Sea washes away the shame**

Sometimes fistula patients arrive at our Fistula Care Centers malnourished and in poor health, so we need some time to prepare them for their operations.

Our team at AWC took a trip to the beach on International Women's Day in March with patients well enough to join them. For many it was the first time they had seen the sea and were a little overwhelmed and scared.

They enjoyed ice-cream, many for the first time, before taking a stroll along the sand.

Fistula patients, by the very nature of the condition, are often isolated from their communities, so the friendships they form while at our Centers are incredibly healing.

By the end of the day they were brave enough to go into the water and together allowed the sea to symbolically wash away the shame of their leaking urine. They were overjoyed!



# Malawi

Our team at the Fistula Care Centre trained **20 health workers** from multiple districts in Malawi to improve care for patients. In addition to treating **253** patients, we expanded our economic empowerment projects, to offer opportunities for former fistula patients post-surgery.

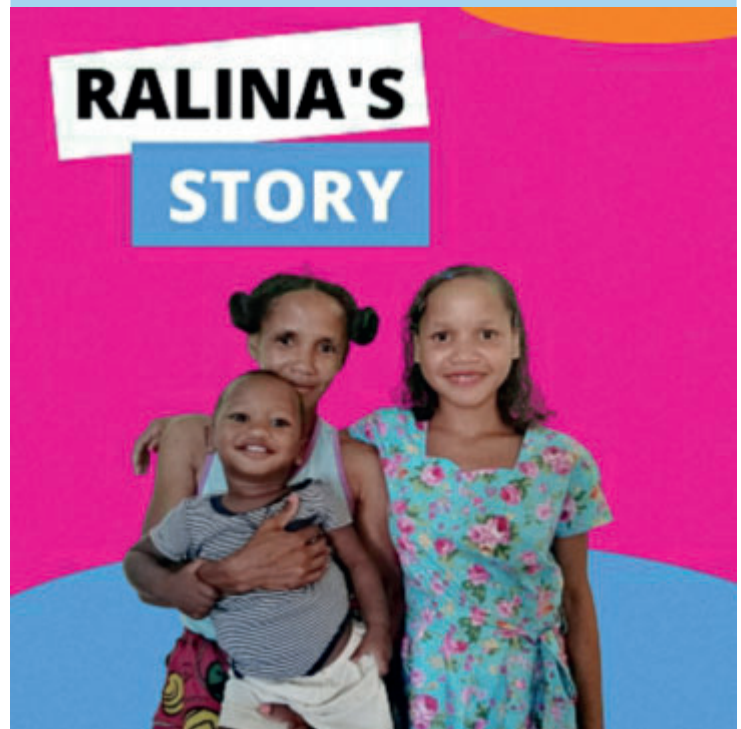
# Madagascar

Our focus this year has been on establishing our **Ambassador Program** to raise awareness about obstetric fistula, maternal health care and the services available at our Fistula Care Centre.



In August of this year Vololona and Madeleine left our clinic healed and both gave a commitment to become Ambassadors for us. They are both from Tsaratanana in the north west region of Madagascar.

## A Journey to Recovery: Learning to Walk Again After Fistula



**Ralina**, 17, from Mahanoro, was a very vulnerable patient who arrived at our Fistula Care Centre in Madagascar with her mother and little brother. Ralina was suffering with an obstetric fistula and drop foot as a result of her injury.

During recovery from surgery, our nurses helped Ralina with short walks every day and, like her little brother who took his first steps in our clinic and is now able to run everywhere, Ralina is free from fistula and able to walk once more.





"I am grateful for all the things the team has done for me. You have given me a fresh start. You gave me the courage to be an independent woman. You brought value to my life. THANK YOU"



**Eletina**, had low self-esteem and lacked confidence due to her condition when she arrived at our Fistula Care Centre in Malawi. During her recovery she enjoyed the cooking demonstration classes and on returning home after surgery her new husband gave her some capital to start a doughnut business using her new skills.

Eletina is thrilled to be 'dry' and now able to help support her family with profits from her new business. In fact, she has made so much she has been able to invest in a second business and has a goal to buy land and build a house.



**Alinafe** was married at 18 and during the birth of her third child developed a childbirth injury, sadly losing the baby.

Alinafe's case was complex and since 2018 she has undergone 3 surgeries to fix her fistula. Her third and final operation was a success, and she is now dry.

"A big thank you to the FCC team, you have transformed my life and you have cured me"

Alinafe was selected to be a recipient of a solar charging station, as part of our income generation initiative, and she uses it to charge phones. Her micro enterprise has enabled her to purchase fertilizer for her farm and pay for school fees for her surviving child. She also hopes to buy livestock including goats, chickens and a cow.

We visited Alinafe in May 2022 to follow up on her progress and provide supplies to help support her businesses. She is doing really well and remains fistula free!

As part of our **Patient Rehabilitation and Education Program (PREP)** we educate patients with literacy and numeracy skills, health education, small enterprise training and income generation projects. We provide all the necessary training and tools to give patients the best chance to support themselves financially post-surgery.

Former **Fistula Patient Ambassadors** are taught about fistula and once back in their communities after surgery, look for patients, share their stories and bring them to our centers for treatment.



# Maternity

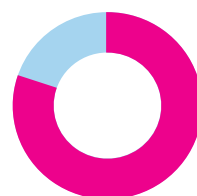
We deliver thousands of babies each year at our Aberdeen Women's Centre (AWC) in Freetown, Sierra Leone, and provide pre and post-natal care, safe deliveries, health education and family planning. Our training program for local Medical Officers is ongoing and we also support the training of student midwives.



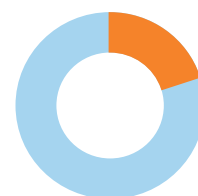
We safely delivered

# 2595

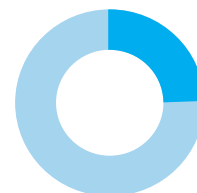
Babies in **Sierra Leone** including



**2071**  
normal  
deliveries



**510**  
c-section  
deliveries



**636**  
teenage  
moms



## Safely delivering babies of former fistula patients

We are always delighted to welcome back **former fistula patients** to the Aberdeen Women's Centre so they can safely deliver their new babies after healing their fistulas.

"When I had a fistula at age 19, I was stressed but AWC took care of me and encouraged me. I am happy to be having my baby here now. AWC to me means happiness and goodness because without this hospital I had nothing. This hospital means everything" Janet

## International Day of the Girl Child

**Baby Zainab** was born on International Day of the Girl Child (Oct 2022) at our Aberdeen Women's Centre, in Sierra Leone, weighing a very healthy 3.85kg (8.5lb). Mother and baby were both healthy and discharged soon after.







## A new addition to the AWC family

Just in time for the **Day of the African Child** in June 2022 our midwife Nannah gave birth to a beautiful baby boy by c-section.

Baby Emmanuel has grown so much since and his many AWC aunties and uncles love to cuddle him when he comes to visit and attend his primary healthcare checks. Mother and baby are doing very well.



Throughout 2022 we continued to **fund maternity services** in Malawi helping 3 centers safely deliver babies and ensure mothers received ante-natal care.



We safely delivered

# 1106

Babies in **Malawi** including



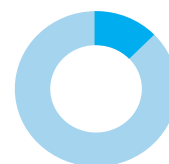
**614**

Achikondi  
Community  
Clinic



**362**

MCH  
Mission  
Hospital



**130**

Chiluzi  
ANC

“Our capacity-building efforts will undoubtedly positively impact the healthcare sector in Malawi, as we continue to empower health workers with the skills and knowledge needed to improve the lives of their patients.”

**Margaret Moyo**  
Fistula Care Centre, Malawi

## Welcome to the world little one

In May we celebrated the safe arrival of Precious' beautiful little bundle of joy at our Aberdeen Women's Centre.

“I appreciate AWC and God for this hospital and getting to give birth here. I feel happy that my child and I have health thanks to AWC”





# Family Planning

All our centers provide free family planning commodities and confidential counselling.



In June 2022, our team from the Aberdeen Women's Centre was delighted to present at the **ACSHR conference** in Sierra Leone. Visitors from all over Africa spoke with our staff and learned about counselling on HIV and family planning.

In 2022 we provided individual counseling for family planning to **4301** women

# 3805

Sierra Leone



# 153

Malawi

# 343

Madagascar

Juliette's job at our Aberdeen Women's Centre is to take care of all patients who are **HIV** positive. All patients are tested for HIV upon arrival and treatment is free. Juliette ensures they receive support, follow-up care and information on the importance of taking their medication and the steps they can take to keep themselves healthy.







In 2022 we conducted

19,923

Consultations at OPC

## Children

A key focus of Freedom From Fistula at our Aberdeen Women's Centre in Sierra Leone is taking active steps to reduce child mortality.

Of the **19,923** consultations undertaken, we saw 218 teenagers (aged 13 to 15) and provided 9801 immunizations.

During the rainy season, our patient numbers in the **outpatient children's clinic** increase, as many children suffer from malaria, flu or typhoid.

In our clinic children receive FREE consultations and medication, immunizations and primary health care. It is the busiest department at our center and we have capacity to see more than 20,000 babies and children from 0-15 every year.

9,801

Immunizations

3,988

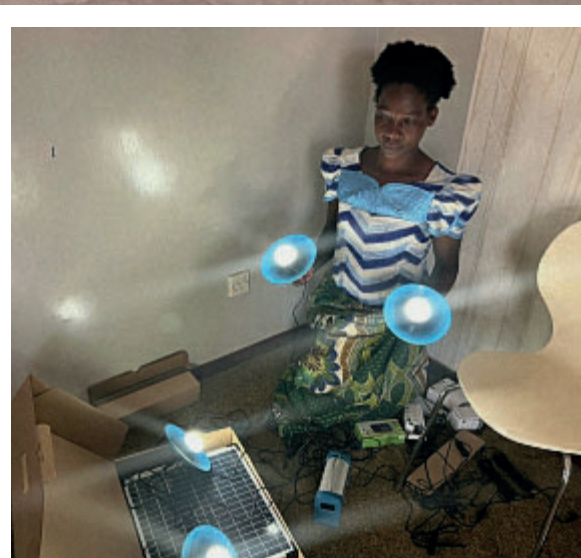
HIV tests of which 78 were positive















## Teenagers

In January 2022, our new group of **30** first time teenage mothers started their classes at the **AWC Skills Training Centre (STC)**, supported by the Aminata Maternal Foundation in Australia.

The STC program helps transform their lives through vocational training to help them gain employment or start businesses, as well as builds their self-esteem and confidence.



## Graduation

After six months of training the girls graduated in **June 2022**, creating an extremely exciting and interesting graduation afternoon.

The girls gave incredible speeches, wrote poems about their dreams and performed a play about how they see the life of teenage girls in Sierra Leone, which sadly showed the tough reality they face.

The girls went on to undertake 3-month internships, with the goal of gaining employment to financially support themselves and their young family.





## Choices made when you have no choice: *The challenges faced by teenage mothers in Sierra Leone*

"I know if I had got someone, a family member, in my life that would have been providing counselling and taking care of my basic needs, I wouldn't be pregnant at this age. Teenage pregnancy and motherhood are very hard. I wish I had known this.

Flooding in one of the slum communities of Freetown where **Tilda** lived with her family forced her to move in with an aunt. When a fire at home killed her aunt Tilda was left devastated, vulnerable and unsupported.

Life became very difficult for Tilda to survive on a daily basis and with few skills and no employment she was forced to make some unimaginable life choices just to be able to afford food. At 15 Tilda fell pregnant.

Tilda joined our Dream Girls classes and we were able to safely deliver her baby and provide the support she needed to get back on her feet.

### **TILDA'S STORY**

**PREGNANT AT 15**

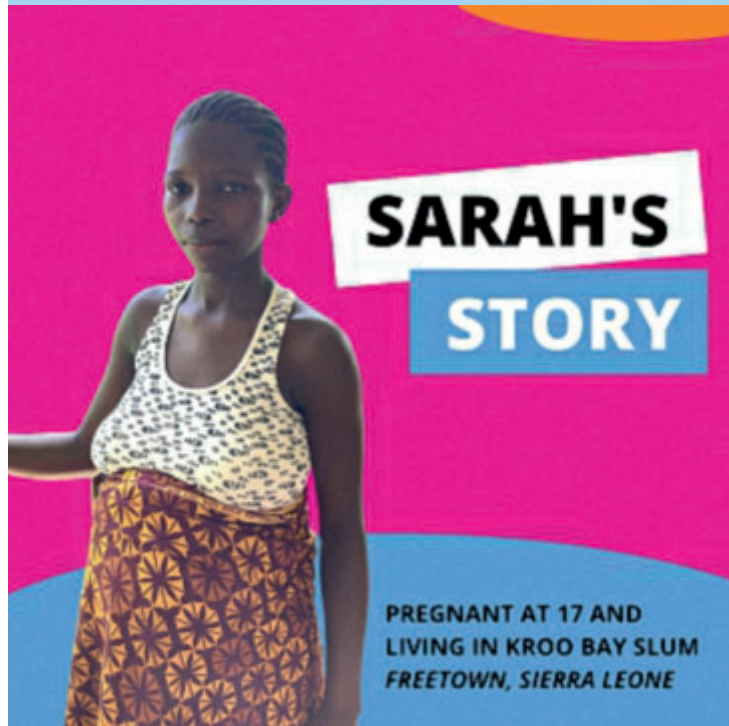
TILDA HAS HAD A CHALLENGING START TO MOTHERHOOD, BUT WITH OUR SUPPORT, SHE AND HER BABY ARE THRIVING



## Supporting Young Mothers: *The Need for Maternal Health Services in the slums of Freetown*

### **SARAH'S STORY**

**PREGNANT AT 17 AND  
LIVING IN KROO BAY SLUM  
FREETOWN, SIERRA LEONE**



**Sarah**, 17 lives in Kroo Bay slum with her mother. Abandoned by her boyfriend and no longer able to attend school she faced pregnancy unable to access quality healthcare.

The team at AWC invited Sarah to join our Dream Girls classes for pregnant teenagers where she received vital prenatal and postpartum care and access to free maternity unit.

The baby was safely delivered and will now receive FREE primary healthcare and immunizations until they are 15, improving their chance of survival in a country where 96.3 children in every 1000 die before their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday.

"I am so grateful for the safe place to give birth. I love to meet other pregnant girls. We speak about our experiences and our dreams. At AWC I feel like someone cares about me"



# Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV)



In 2022 we treated **172** survivors of SGBV

46

Under 10

114

Aged 11 - 17

12

Over 18

In 2022, we treated **172** survivors of SGBV, our youngest was just **2 years old** and our oldest **42**.

We held **249** counselling sessions and made **186** visits to the Police Family Support Unit (FSU)

In **June 2022**, 'A Girl At A Time' organization held a workshop, hosted by AWC, to train frontline professionals to provide a better response to women and girls experiencing SGBV and abuse.

Our social worker Martha and our SGBV lead nurse Mariama attended and were delighted to work in partnership with 'A Girl At A Time' to raise awareness of SGBV and best practice.





# Building in country capacity through training

## Staff training

Our team at the Aberdeen Women's Centre in Sierra Leone have been building capacity through staff training, including providing training for **5 Medical Officers, 1 STP, 4 STP Students, 15 Nurses, 8 Midwives, 8 Midwife Students and 5 Teenagers for Internship**. The midwives and nurses were newly graduated, some with work experience. All newly posted clinical staff joining AWC undergo training to ensure our high standards are met.

Thanks to funding from UNFPA through the Spotlight Initiative, the KOICA project, and the Iceland government, our fistula Care Centre in Malawi provided comprehensive two-week training in fistula care and management and a one-month training in fistula repairs of minor surgeries. This training program equipped **4 ward nurses and 4 theatre nurses** with the necessary skills to provide quality fistula care to their patients. These health workers came from districts across Malawi.

Dr Michael Breen, at our Fistula Care Centre in Madagascar, led the short-term training in fistula of **6 local surgeons** from Pavillon Sainte Fleur, SALFA and the local hospital. In addition, we trained **2 volunteer nurses**, both of whom subsequently secured employment with FFF in different roles. Our goal is to continue training 2 volunteer nurses each year.

## Patient Ambassador program

A vital component of our work is identifying women and girls suffering with fistula, as they often live outside the boundaries of normal society due to their condition.

Our recent graduates from the Patient Ambassador program at our Fistula Care Centre in Malawi, supported by UNFPA Malawi and KOICA, were presented with their certificates and bikes to help them get around their districts.

At our Fistula Care Centre in Madagascar, we successfully conducted an Ambassador training program, with **19 volunteer ambassadors** who have significantly contributed to the efficiency of our patient identification project. These ambassadors have expanded their reach across multiple regions of Madagascar, with some even operating over 1000 km away from the clinic. Their dedication and efforts have resulted in the majority of our patients now being referred by ambassadors. The ambassadors training included **3 former patients, 4 nurses and 12 volunteers**.





# Economic Empowerment

Thanks to the generosity of supporters, our Fistula Care Centre in Malawi piloted new micro-enterprise economic empowerment projects in 2022, to help support former fistula patients become financially independent and prove there is life after fistula.

## Malawi Goat Project

We identified **4** former fistula patients living in the Salima district and provided them with micro finance training, information on animal husbandry and three vaccinated kid goats (two female and one male) with a view to them **raising and breeding domestic goats**.

Goats can be a vital source of income, not just producing meat and milk, but also value-added products such as cheese and butter which patients can sell at market, and waste products they can use to fertilize crops.

## Tea Room

**5** former fistula patients living in Mitundu, Lilongwe district were provided with micro finance training, training in scone and tea making, customer care and tea room management, to equip them with the basic knowledge required to establish and run a successful **tea room**.

## Vegetable farming

We identified **7** former fistula patients living in the Lilongwe district and provided them with micro finance training, training in growing of vegetable crops and all the necessary materials to start their **vegetable gardening business**.

Patients can use the food they grow for themselves and their families and sell surplus at the local market.





## Tailoring & Recycled Pad Projects

Our Fistula Care Centre in Malawi organized an 8 day **sewing machine workshop** to teach **18** former fistula patients who are struggling financially to support themselves and their families. The women were taught how to make reusable sanitary pads, face masks and the basic skills of clothes making with a view to them setting up their own tailoring business, once they return home. Patients are based in Blantyre, Balaka, Salima, Mangochi, Zomba, Ntcheu, Phalombe, Kasungu, Mulanje, Thyolo, Nkhosakota and Lilongwe.



## Solar Powered Lighting Stations

In November our Fistula Care Centre in Malawi trained **7** fistula patients in Dedza under the KOICA and UNFPA Malawi program, how to use the **solar powered lighting stations**. These micro-enterprise opportunities provide former patients with a life after fistula, where they can be financially independent and become a key contributor to their community.



## Solar Jet-Flame Kits

C-QUEST CAPITAL, in partnership with our Freedom From Fistula Care Centre in Malawi, have started distributing **solar jet-flame stoves** to our former fistula patients.

Training is given 2 days a week, where patients are taught to build and operate the jet-flame stove.

Jet-Flame Kits, are a combustion accessory that cleans up emissions in wood burning cook stoves. The Jet-Flame was designed by the Gates funded Global Health Laboratories and is the first low cost insert that can be used in almost all homemade cook stoves while cleanly burning many types of readily available fuels.





# News and Events

## Dutch Ambassador and First Secretary visit AWC



In April we were delighted to welcome the **Dutch Ambassador and the First Secretary** to the Aberdeen Women's Centre in Freetown, Sierra Leone.



## Midwives Matter!

In May the Fistula Care Centre in Malawi was invited to display a pavilion at Santhe in Kasungu district, to raise awareness of the importance of quality maternal healthcare in preventing obstetric fistula and the work we do. The event was attended by the **Minister of Health Hon. Khumbize Kandodo Chiponda**.

## UNFPA visit FCC Malawi



In May we were delighted to welcome to our Fistula Care Centre in Malawi representatives from **UNFPA** Malawi, who were undertaking a review of the UNFPA Country Program.

## End Fistula Day



In May and June, all our teams took part in events to mark **International Day to End Obstetric Fistula**, raising awareness in their communities and engaging with partner organizations.

## Give Blood, Give Life



The celebration of the **International Blood Donation Day** was held in June at the town hall of Toamasina in Madagascar. The ceremony was attended by officials including our team from the Fistula Care Centre.



## Menstrual Hygiene



In July CPAR Malawi approached our Fistula Care Centre, to assist with a research project on **Menstrual Hygiene Managmeent** in primary schools. Our task was to provide health education sessions with the girls on MHM, Fistula awareness and Fistula prevention, and the training of sewing reusable sanitary pads with the girls and mother groups. We were delighted to be part of the project supporting women and girls in Malawi.

## Building Relationships



In July our Director at the centre in Madagascar, Liz Macleod, met Mr. Koffi Kouame, Resident Representative for **UNFPA** in Antanananarivo and in October with Veronique de La Rochefoucauld, the **Ambassador of the Order of Malta for Madagascar** to discuss ways of working together to identify obstetric fistula patients across the country.

## Baylor Malawi and Texas Children's Hospital



In October the Fistula Care Centre in Malawi were thrilled to receive a donation of cystoscopy equipment from **Baylor Malawi and Texas Children's Hospital**. Our Theatre Sister Ida (right) and Nurse Mercy were delighted to receive the donation from Dr Jeff Wilkinson.

## Community Awareness



In November staff and patient ambassadors from our Fistula Care Centre in Malawi undertook community awareness in Dedza and Mchinji district under the **UNFPA Malawi and KOICA programme**, raising awareness about maternal health, fistula, fistula prevention and treatment.



# Partnerships

We are grateful to all of our partners who enable us to provide medical services and support for the women and children in Africa. Thank you.



OPERATION  
**FISTULA**



Thank you also to an anonymous foundation, local organizations and individual donors who supported us in 2022.



# Financial Overview 2022

	Sierra Leone	Malawi	Madagascar
	\$	\$	\$
Total Operating Cost	1,105,672	700,402	453,348
<b>Funded by</b>			
Gloag Foundation (1)	517,304	203,010	212,533
Fistula Foundation (2)		239,045	
UNFPA (3)		208,955	
Aminata Maternal Foundation (4)	95,639		
Rotary (5)	133,349		
Mercy Ships (6)			182,657
Freedom From Fistula USA	26,695	26,695	26,695
Other Donations (7)	332,685	22,697	31,463
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,105,672</b>	<b>700,402</b>	<b>453,348</b>

1. Funding from Gloag Foundation includes donations to Freedom From Fistula (UK) and any direct support to the projects.
2. Fistula Foundation provided funding towards surgeries and Clinical Officer training.
3. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) provided local grants in Sierra Leone and Malawi that partially financed the fistula programmes.
4. Aminata Maternal Foundation provided funding support for the midwifery training, teenage maternity services and teenage support projects.
5. Rotary provided support towards core costs in Sierra Leone.
6. Mercy Ships UK provided funding for fistula surgeries in Madagascar.
7. This includes support from Operation Fistula and an anonymous foundation.

Gloag Foundation separately finances overheads, including fundraising costs, capital costs, administration and related expenditure.

We are grateful for other anonymous donations and legacies donated in support of our projects.



All services are provided **FREE OF CHARGE** and we couldn't do all that we do without your support.

We are grateful to all our supporters and partners, private individuals, charitable trusts, businesses, local and international aid agencies and government departments.

Here are some ideas of how you could help in the USA to meet the healthcare needs of women and children in Sierra Leone, Malawi and Madagascar:

## Donate online

Donate via [www.freedomfromfistula.org/support/donate](http://www.freedomfromfistula.org/support/donate).

## Make a regular donation

Email us at [info@freedomfromfistula.org](mailto:info@freedomfromfistula.org)

## Organize a fund-raising event

For ideas, visit our website at [www.freedomfromfistula.org/support](http://www.freedomfromfistula.org/support)

## Arrange a corporate sponsorship / donation

Nominate Freedom From Fistula as part of your company's Corporate Social Responsibility program.

## Leave a legacy

Leave a legacy by remembering Freedom From Fistula Foundation in your will.

[www.freedomfromfistula.org/support/remember-us](http://www.freedomfromfistula.org/support/remember-us)

