



# Clinton Global Initiative Commitment: Obstetric Fistula in Mali: Women Living with Dignity



Geographic Focus:  
Mali



Timeframe:  
2014-2016



Partners:  
UNFPA/Mali, SamaHope, Direct Relief,  
Orange Mali Foundation, Inner Wheel  
Mali, and the Peter C. Alderman  
Foundation

IntraHealth International—together with Louise Winstanly, chair of IntraHealth’s board of directors—and our partners are committed to addressing the diverse needs of Malian women who suffer from the effects of obstetric fistula.

A highly preventable and treatable condition, obstetric fistula can occur during obstructed or prolonged labor when the tissues between the baby’s head and the mother’s pelvis become compressed. Within days, the tissue sometimes dies and creates an opening—called a fistula. The results: chronic incontinence, pain, infections, and sometimes even severe nerve damage.

Two million women worldwide live with fistula. Up to 100,000 more develop the condition every year, according to the World Health Organization. In low-income countries such as Mali, many women do not have access to the skilled health care that can prevent fistula, and they may suffer with it for years.

Fistula’s physical and emotional tolls are incalculable. Women who suffer from it are often abandoned, ostracized from their families and communities, and forced to live alone on the fringes of society.

“By coordinating our efforts and collaborating for greater impact, we can change the way societies react to fistula and the way they provide health care,” Winstanly says. “The Clinton Global Initiative provides a platform that will help us leverage IntraHealth’s longstanding leadership in global health and its robust network of partners to drive change for women suffering with fistula.”

Through our Clinton Global Initiative commitment, our partnership will expand fistula care and treatment in Mali, improve collection of data about fistula’s many effects, develop a telephone support network and call-in center through which women suffering from fistula can connect with peers, and better prepare Mali’s health workforce to provide holistic fistula care.

Together, we will help more Malian women live with greater dignity, health, and wellbeing.



## Our commitment

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Since 2008, IntraHealth has worked closely with the Malian government, health workers, local partners, and USAID to reduce the enormous backlog of women waiting for life-altering fistula repair surgeries. Through our new commitment, we will expand and augment our efforts and work with our partners to:

- Expand fistula treatment and care in Mali, including both health and social services.
- Provide treatment and care for 800 women in up to 7 regions (Kayes, Sikasso, Gao, Koulikoro, Bamako, Mopti, and Ségou).
- Improve the collection of data about the mental, psychosocial, and financial effects of fistula on women in Mali to better understand and meet their nonclinical needs before and after surgery.
- Establish a telephone support network and call-in center where clients can find support from their peers before and after undergoing repair surgeries.
- Build the capacity of Mali's health workers to provide high-quality care to clients with fistula, including more complex repair surgeries, mental health support, and psychosocial assistance.
- Address the backlog of women waiting for fistula services by crowdfunding a fistula surgeon.
- Create a welcome center at Sikasso Regional Hospital that will house fistula clients and their caregivers during the 3-4 weeks of surgery and treatment.
- Provide funding for at least 50 additional surgeries per year, as well as high-quality medicines and supplies to support 50 surgeries.
- Unite existing resources from public, private, and nongovernmental organizations and attract new resources to improve and expand fistula services in Mali.
- Leverage and build on our national network to introduce a holistic approach to fistula care that extends beyond the traditional treatment protocol.

