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MALI

SUCCESS STORY

Women Continue to Receive Critical Care in Times of Conflict

USAID saved the lives of 22 women under fistula treatment, moving them from the war-torn city of Gao to a safer hospital in Mopti, central Mali, for care.



Photo: USAID/Mali

Ms. R. Maïga, a fistula client, transferred from Gao to Mopti to receive care.

“For several days I couldn’t tell the difference between night and day, I truly give thanks to God, I’m a real miracle!”

Each year, thousands of women die during pregnancy and childbirth in Mali. Among those who do not die, an unknown number suffers from obstetric fistula, a maternal injury with perhaps the most devastating aftermath. As part of USAID’s assistance aiming at saving the lives of Malians, the Fistula Care Project partnered with the regional hospital of Gao, and local non-governmental organization *Groupe de Recherche, d’Étude, de Formation Femme Action* (GREFFA) in northern Mali to make quality fistula treatment services available. In less than three years of implementation, the project supported 230 fistula repair surgeries, trained five doctors and 187 nurses in fistula surgery and management, over 200 doctors and nurses on safe motherhood-related topics, and 184 people in fistula counseling. The future looked even brighter until the city of Gao fell into the hands of armed rebel groups in April 2012. The Gao hospital was ransacked and looted while it hosted 12 women in post-operative fistula care and another 12 awaiting surgery. The women were chased out of the hospital, some with their catheters and infusion bags still inserted.

After the Gao hospital was ransacked, USAID supported a search for women who suffered from obstetric fistula. As a result of the search, 22 of the women suffering from obstetric fistula were found and transferred to Mopti regional hospital, central Mali, for care. Their lives are no longer in danger!

“I had been operated on, and they told me I needed care for a month. When the hospital was ransacked, my companion disappeared. We were all alone in the middle of the chaos at the hospital — even the bed I was sleeping on had been stolen. There was no health worker to remove my catheter. I truly give thanks to God and to GREFFA who looked for me and treated me. I was told I had an infection, and for several days I couldn’t tell the difference between day and night. I truly give thanks to God; I’m a real miracle! After my check-up in Mopti, the surgeon told me my fistula has completely closed!” Ms. R. Maïga, one of the rescued women, still recalls the episode vividly.

Today, like Ms. R. Maïga, most of the women are nearly healed. They have pledged to do everything they can to help find their sisters who continue to suffer from fistula and encourage them to undergo treatment. More important, with their healed fistula, they feel better armed to overcome abandonment and neglect by their husbands and families, and to walk out of poverty and vulnerability associated with fistula.