



WORLDWIDE FISTULA FUND
HEALING WOMEN, RESTORING LIVES

Finding Hope After Tears: Living with Fistula



Everybody in the village talks about you. Some just laugh at you, others say you are being punished by God. I have cried until my eyes are dry - Saidou



Above: The operating room at WFF's Danja Fistula Center (DFC) in Niger. Over 370 fistula repair surgeries were performed at DFC since it opened in February 2012. The 42-bed hospital includes an

At 14, Saidou was forced to marry her cousin. At 16, she became pregnant and gave birth to a stillborn baby. By 20, she had been living with a tear in her birth canal and leaking urine for four years.

The [Worldwide Fistula Fund](#) (WFF) helps women like Saidou suffering from obstetric fistula - a hole in the birth canal caused by prolonged, obstructed labor. Child brides like Saidou face higher chances of adolescent pregnancy and associated health risks like fistula or even maternal death. Those who survive often live like a shadow, ostracized by their family and community.

"Everybody in the village talks about you and your condition when you pass by," Saidou said. "Some people just laugh at you and others say you are being punished by God for something bad you have done. With the fistula, it is just as if I do not exist. I have cried until my eyes are dry."

By the time Saidou went into labor, she had received no prenatal care during her pregnancy. She labored at home for two days before eventually giving birth to a stillborn baby. She incurred a fistula from the traumatic childbirth and started to leak uncontrollably.

For a small tear, the fistula ripped apart Saidou's life. Due to the odor, she was rejected by her community. A year later, she was abandoned by her husband, who took another wife. Saidou was

operating theater and 24-person long-term stay hostel facility.

Niger has one of the world's highest rates of child marriage - 76 percent of women ages 20-24 reported being married before 18, according to the United Nations Populations Fund (UNFPA). Of the reporting group, 10 percent had given birth before the age of 15 and 48 percent before 18.

At Worldwide Fistula Fund's Danja Fistula Center in Niger, there were 69 surgeries performed between April and June of this year. The patients' ages ranged from 16 to 57, with half of them less than 30 years old. Most of them had given birth to their first baby before the age of 20. The average length of their labor was three days. Nearly 76 percent had given birth to a stillborn baby.

devastated, as she and her husband had grown up together and hoped to start a family together.

"Then I heard about the Danja Fistula Center (DFC) on the radio and came from Nigeria to have the surgery."

At [WFF's DFC in Danja](#), Niger, women receive free obstetric fistula repair surgery, rehabilitation and vocational and literacy skills training.

Now Saidou is on the road to recovery after her successful surgery. As she received comprehensive care, including housing, three meals a day and support from other women recovering from fistula surgery, she was healed in more ways than one. Saidou hopes to marry again, and start a new life.



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