



WORLDWIDE FISTULA FUND
HEALING WOMEN, RESTORING LIVES

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HEALING & DIGNITY

The monthly newsletter for Worldwide Fistula Fund

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Some of WFF team members in Mekelle, Ethiopia (L-R): Dr. Wall (WFF Founder), Dr. Melaku (Mekelle University), Maureen Powers (WFF Executive Director), Dr. Payne (WFF Board Vice Chair), Dr. Lassey (University of Ghana), Dr. Lowder (Washington University in St. Louis) and Dr. Roentgen.

Growing Ethiopia's Health Care Capacity by Training Specialists in Childbirth Injuries



Dr. Anyetei Lassey

Dr. Anyetei Lassey knows first hand that advanced medical training in Africa helps retain specialists desperately needed to improve women's health care.

Africa needs specialist training programs like WFF's Mekelle University collaboration to encourage doctors to further their studies here. A significant number of African doctors who study abroad do not return home.

WFF made possible Dr. Lassey's fistula training in Addis Ababa, and he has been treating **women with fistula** ever since.

Dr. Lassey and his team serve 13 Ghana hospitals to provide fistula care. He is the Assistant Professor of Obstetrics & Gynecology at the University of Ghana and supervises their sub-specialty fellowship training in urogynecology.

Specialty Training Focused on Women's Health

Urogynecology focuses on women with urinary tract dysfunction (like fistula) and disorders stemming from loss of support of pelvic structures. Dr. Lassey recently joined WFF in Ethiopia to share his experience managing Ghana's fellowship program in urogynecology and to confirm the program's success in retaining local doctors.

**"Brain Drain:"
sub-Saharan African
doctors' migration
abroad - a major
contributor to weak
health systems**

**Africa has only 2%
of the global
supply of doctors.**

Source: British Medical Journal,
bmj.com, September 23, 2011

WFF Improves Access to Care and Fistula Prevention

Dr. Lassey was part of an impressive group that WFF Founder Dr. Wall assembled June 9-11, 2015, as part of the 2015 Mekelle Medical Education Collaboration (MMEC) at Mekelle University in Ethiopia. Ethiopian medical students, residents and faculty received expert instruction in urogynecology - funded by WFF. This program was developed to address "brain drain" by retaining more African doctors, to increase expert maternal care access and to improve the overall safety of childbirth.



Dr. Wall (second from right) was joined by three WFF Board Members: **Dr. Christopher Payne** (far left), **Dr. Tracy Spitznagle** and **Dr. Rahel Nardos**. Lectures included: recent fistula research, pelvic floor physiology, childbirth injury treatments and much more. Dr. Jerry Lowder joined from Washington University in St. Louis (where Dr. Wall & Dr. Spitznagle are faculty).

WFF is working with partners to launch Ethiopia's first fellowship training program in urogynecology at Mekelle University.

[MORE ABOUT WFF ACCESS AND PREVENTION PROGRAMS](#)

Joni Kabana's Guest Blog: Using a Thumb Drum to Prevent Fistula in Uganda



The African man suffers a generalized stigma that portrays him as typically uncaring, a tyrant who dominates women, marries them at an early age, and abandons them when they become ill.

There is another side to this portrayal.

Stephen Otim uses music, lyrics and dialog to educate others to look for signs of obstructed labor and also to refer a loved one for care should she develop a fistula...

[READ JONI'S BLOG](#)



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Worldwide Fistula Fund (WFF) is a nonprofit global health organization that helps heal girls and women in sub-Saharan Africa who suffer from obstetric fistula. Obstetric fistula is a devastating childbirth injury that leaves a woman incontinent: leaking urine or feces through her vagina uncontrollably. WFF provides life-changing surgery, rehabilitation, support and skills training to help women build new lives and rejoin communities that once shunned them. Founded in 1995, we are the oldest organization in the United States focused on obstetric fistula.