



## *A Miraculous Place of Hope and Care*

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

#### **Media Contact:**

Sarah Flores, Representing UFFT

512-344-2045

[sflores@hahnpublic.com](mailto:sflores@hahnpublic.com)

### **UGANDA NGO TERREWODE RECEIVES FUNDING FOR WOMEN'S HOSPITAL TO SERVE OBSTETRIC FISTULA PATIENTS**

September 21, 2017 – EUGENE, Oregon – Women in Uganda suffering from obstetric fistula just received a million reasons to be hopeful.

Support from the Uganda Fistula Fund for TERREWODE, as well as the Hamlin International Partners in Australia and the United States, has raised over \$1.6 million for TERREWODE, a non-governmental organization in East Uganda, which implements a community outreach program to provide surgical treatment and holistic education and empowerment for women with obstetric fistula. The funds will be used to build a specialized women's hospital including a 30-bed fistula surgical block and a 30-bed social reintegration block in Soroti, Uganda, modeled after the renowned Hamlin Fistula Hospital in Ethiopia.

"The TERREWODE Women's Community Hospital (TWCH), which replicates the Hamlin model of care, will be a miraculous place of hope and care that Ugandan women never thought possible," TERREWODE founder and director Alice Emasu said. "We are extremely grateful to all supporters on behalf of our patients and families. We look forward to working with the International Fistula Alliance (IFA) and the Hamlin partners to deliver this project."

Funds received will go to the construction of a modern, specialized facility that will restore the lives of women suffering from the tragic birth injury of obstetric fistula. Six acres of land have been purchased in Soroti and the architectural plans are almost finalized. Construction will begin in early 2018 with clinical services beginning in mid-2019.

"Thousands of Ugandan women suffer incontinence and shame from fistula, a childbirth injury which can be repaired with surgery," said Sharon Howe, president of Uganda Fistula Fund in Eugene, Oregon, which partners with TERREWODE. "As the first dedicated fistula hospital in Uganda, TERREWODE Women's Community Hospital will improve maternal health throughout the region and allow women to fully participate in their communities."

#### **About Obstetric Fistula**

Obstetric fistula affects more than two million women and girls worldwide. It occurs when women experience obstructed, prolonged labor without access to emergency medical care or a caesarean section. During the obstructed labor, pressure from the fetus on the mother's soft tissue creates a hole between the vagina and the bladder and/or rectum, which causes uncontrollable incontinence. In most cases, the baby dies. Often ostracized from family and community, sufferers are subjected to isolation and a life of physical hardship and mental anguish.



Obstetric fistula affects an estimated 2,000 Ugandan women each year. The root causes of fistula problems are severe poverty, poor access to quality maternal health care, and the low status of women and girls, according to Emasu, a social worker and women's rights activist.

Trained fistula surgeons can successfully close the fistula in most cases, curing the woman of her incontinence. Surgery to stop bodily leakage is a mother's only hope and costs about \$550 in Uganda. TERREWODE's new facility will give women the necessary long-term recovery, health education and reintegration therapy to restore a dignified, healthy life.

### **TERREWODE and Uganda Fistula Fund**

TERREWODE has been supporting women and girls affected by obstetric fistula to receive free surgical services in partnership with the Ministry of Health, since 2001. It has developed a successful community-based social reintegration program that helps women return to their homes and their communities and once again live productive lives. TERREWODE now operates in three regions of Uganda: Eastern, Northern Central and some parts of Western Uganda. TERREWODE will continue to offer reproductive and maternal health education and family planning services.

The Uganda Fistula Fund for TERREWODE (UFFT) was founded in Eugene, Oregon by a national group of global women health professionals to financially support the works of TERREWODE in Uganda. For more information, visit <https://www.ugandafistulafund.org/>.

### **An International Team Effort**

The IFA is a representative body of the Hamlin Fistula International partner organizations from Australia, U.S.A., U.K., Netherlands, Germany, Sweden and New Zealand who currently support the work of the renowned Hamlin Fistula Ethiopia, founded by Australian doctors Catherine and Reginald Hamlin in 1974. Over the past 40 years, Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital and five regional hospital centers in Ethiopia concentrating on obstetric fistula treatment have helped more than 50,000 women recover and lead normal lives. The Hamlin model of care is a holistic model that includes best practice clinical and surgical treatment as well as comprehensive rehabilitation and reintegration services that supports the restoration of dignity for women suffering from fistula injuries. TERREWODE Women's Community Hospital will replicate the highly respected Hamlin model.

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