

# “End Fistula Campaign” in Puntland

Aims to Promote and Support Women’s Health

## End Fistula Campaign 2012

*“In order to succeed with this very important project to our society, we need to cooperate hand-in-hand and fight against fistula.”*

Deputy Minister of Health and Women Advocator, Puntland, Honorable Zainab Usas Yasin.

*“UNFPA prioritizes the fight against fistula because we want to directly impact women and girls.”*

UNFPA OIC in Puntland,  
Dr. Ibrahim Obsiye Elmi.



*“As the women who were operated in Puntland did not get the chance to receive good quality services at the time of delivery to prevent fistula, under the leadership of Puntland Ministry of Health and technical assistance from WAHA, UNFPA works together to bring joy and happiness to the affected women and their families.”*

UNFPA Deputy Representative,  
Dr. Rogaia Abdelrahim

## UNFPA Launched "End Fistula Campaign" in Bosaso, Puntland

UNFPA Somalia in collaboration with the Ministry of Health - Puntland, launched "End Fistula Campaign" at Juba Hotel, Bosaso last Friday, December 19, 2012. The Campaign was attended by higher government officials, community leaders, health workers, WAHA International and community members .

During the opening speech the Honorable Zainab Usas Yasin, Deputy Minister of Health and Women Advocator, lauded UNFPA Somalia for its continuous support to end fistula throughout the country. She said "The Fistula treatment supported by UNFPA and its partner WAHA, will contribute a lot to the fistula affected women and girls". She added, "In order to succeed with this very important project to our society, we need to cooperate hand-in-hand and fight against fistula".

Speaking during the launch, Dr. Ibrahim Obsiye Elmi, UNFPA OIC in Puntland, called women and girls affected by fistula to come and get the free services at Bosaso General Hospital. He said “UNFPA prioritizes the fight against fistula because we want to directly impact women and girls.” He lauded the government for its continued commitment and support to the "End Fistula Campaign".

Dr. Elmi disclosed that during the campaign any fistula victim who will visit the hospital would be provided with a comprehensive service of surgery, counseling, food and accommodation,

as well as money for transportation, clothes and hygiene products purchase. He also indicated that local health workers would simultaneously get on-the-job training on fistula surgery.

The WAHA Fistula Surgeon, Dr. Nussy Basimike, explained fistula as a condition mostly caused when women and/or girls experience complications during child birth which makes them to urinate and/or defecate involuntarily. Dr. Elmi added, “It is estimated that around 90% of the deliveries take place at home attended by family members and/or TBAs.” Both doctors stressed the special need for a continued fight against fistula to reduce the number of victims in Somalia. Teenage pregnancy and FGM/C (Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting) are also other contributing factors to fistula. Although statistics are lacking there are indications of high prevalence in Somalia.

The “End Fistula Campaign” is being implemented by UNFPA Somalia in partnership with WAHA International, an International NGO that works to help women access the healthcare services they need to live their lives fully and in dignity. So far the team has identified 34 fistula cases, aged 17 to 65 years, from Bosaso, Garowe, Qardho, Ethiopia, Alula, and Burtinle. The campaign will be implemented until December 28<sup>th</sup>, 2012 through surgery, post-operative care and rehabilitation support at the public hospital, Bosasso General Hospital. In addition, UNFPA is providing on-the-job fistula repair trainings to the local Somali health workers and raising community awareness on the availability of free fistula repair services at the public hospital.



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*“I have a message for other sisters: I want to tell you all not to deliver at home. You must always be ready to go to health centers... don't let fistula happen to you!”*

**Fistula Survivor, Bosaso General Hospital, Qali Ahmend Osman.**



*“A healthy woman makes a healthy family, hence a healthy nation. Thanks UNFPA and WAHA International for giving these poor women a second chance to enjoy life and to be happy.”*

**Operation Theatre Nurse, WAHA International, Fatuma Yossuf.**

## Safia, Beneficiary of the “End Fistula Campaign”

Safia Adan is one of the fistula survivors of the “End Fistula Campaign”. Safia is a 32 years old house wife, a mother of 2 daughters and a boy. She has been living with fistula complications for over 9 years.

In 2004, during the delivery of her first child at home, she was in a prolonged laboring at her home. When her Traditional Birth Attendant (TBA) realized that she was experiencing complications, the TBA advised her to go to Garowe Hospital, which is found near her village. At the hospital, though she delivered her child alive, it was too late to prevent her from fistula.



**Campaign Team doing rounds at Bosaso General Hospital  
Dr. Elmi, Nurse Fatuma, Surgeon Nessay, Ms. Safia**

Heartbroken and injured, Safia suffered for over 9 years. Her depression grew as all further 3 attempts of fistula surgery failed, in Garowe. She worried that she would never get a cure for it. Fistula patients are often confronted with discrimination and isolation

In December 2012, Safia came to Bosaso General Hospital and received a successful fistula surgery provided by the UNFPA Somalia, which runs the “End Fistula Campaign” aimed at improving maternal health. Now she holds several hopes about her future, since incontinence is no longer a barrier in her life.

During the Campaign Team visit, Safia turned to me, smiled, and uttered a word which, probably, might be unfamiliar in the past 9 years: “ALhamduLiLLah!”



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