



Changing Lives, Changing Communities

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P R E S S R E L E A S E

UN Deputy Secretary General visit puts a focus on fistula work at CCBRT

The UN Deputy Secretary General Dr. Asha Rose Migiro visited Comprehensive Community Based Rehabilitation in Tanzania (CCBRT) on Monday, having chosen the organisation as an exemplary initiative of UN's support in Tanzania.

Despite the occurrence of an estimated 4,000 new cases yearly of obstetric fistula in Tanzania, only 800 life-changing fistula surgeries are performed on an annual basis. A study conducted jointly by Family Care International (FCI), and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), identified three main barriers that prevent women with fistula from seeking surgery: the costs of surgery; lodging; and transportation.

In 2009, UNFPA and CCBRT partnered to overcome these barriers by launching a pilot initiative using Vodacom's mobile-to-mobile banking technology, Vodafone M-PESA. The technology facilitates in sending money to women detected with fistula in rural areas, which they use as transportation fare to CCBRT Disability Hospital in Dar es Salaam. UNFPA also funded the refurbishment of an existing empty building at CCBRT to accommodate an additional 20 women with fistula awaiting treatment. CCBRT has been offering free fistula surgery since December 2009 and it has tremendously helped women with the condition to access the services they need without facing the previous barriers.

UN Deputy Secretary General, Dr. Asha Rose Migiro said, "Improving the health of women and children is a collaborative effort that will require all of us to act. Healthy women have healthy children, and they are the foundation for strong communities and strong economies. Together we can build a healthy future for all. There are hundred of women in the world who live in hiding because of fistula. What CCBRT and UNFPA are doing is indeed commendable. "

With UNFPA funding of US \$20,000, since December 2009, CCBRT has been able to manage the initiative that uses CCBRT 'ambassadors' across Tanzania, to refer women with fistula for treatment. Mr. Erwin Telemans, the Chief Executive Officer, of CCBRT says, "While we are among the largest providers of fistula surgery in Tanzania, we still have the capacity to do more. We have been facing the challenge of encouraging women to come forward for treatment. We are delighted that UNFPA is now assisting us with that challenge: since January this year, 119 women with fistula have come for treatment at CCBRT, 56 of whom came on transport paid for via Vodafone M-PESA. Today we extend a warm welcome to UN Deputy Secretary General Dr. Asha Rose Migiro. We are indeed honoured by her visit to see the life saving services of CCBRT firsthand".

"I commend CCBRT for restoring dignity and giving hope to women who had lost hope due to fistula. UNFPA stresses the importance of improving maternal health particularly in providing access to reliable and safe maternal healthcare and services. The use of M-PESA has helped in reducing the bottlenecks that these women are facing", commented Dr. Julitta Onabanjo, UNFPA Tanzania Representative.

The majority of disabilities can be prevented through improved maternal and infant healthcare. In recognition of this, CCBRT has entered into a public-private partnership with the Government of Tanzania to establish a new maternity hospital in Dar es Salaam. The new hospital will fall under the status of Specialised Referral Hospital for the eastern zone of Tanzania. It will provide comprehensive maternal and newborn healthcare and will offer a high quality service for up to 12,000 women each year.

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Notes to Editors

About CCBRT

Comprehensive Community Based Rehabilitation in Tanzania (CCBRT) is the largest indigenous provider of disability and rehabilitation services in Tanzania. Each year approximately 120,000 people directly access its services which include a disability hospital, community programme, an education programme and economic empowerment initiatives. CCBRT also runs extensive national and international training programmes and is actively advocating for the rights of people with disabilities to be recognised at national policy level.

CCBRT's main aim is to improve the quality of life for people living with a disability, their family members and caregivers to enable them to become full members of society. In a public-private partnership with the Government of Tanzania, CCBRT is also in the process of establishing a new maternity hospital for Dar es Salaam region. Construction is due to begin in 2011 next to the current disability hospital in Msasani.

About UNFPA Tanzania

UNFPA, United Nations Population Fund, is an international development agency, part of the UN system in Tanzania, Delivering as One. UNFPA has been supporting the government of Tanzania since 1971 and it works in partnership with other UN agencies, development partners, non-governmental organisations, civil society and professional associations to promote the right of every woman, man and child to enjoy a life of health and equal opportunity. UNFPA support countries in using population data for policies and programmes to reduce poverty and to ensure that every pregnancy is wanted, every birth is safe, every young person is free of HIV and AIDS, and every girl and woman is treated with dignity and respect.

UNFPA's work in Tanzania contributes to the outcomes of MKUKUTA and MKUZA, the national poverty strategies in the mainland and Zanzibar. Among the UN agencies, UNFPA is the lead agency in gender equality and reproductive health. The agency also supports youth, HIV prevention efforts and the use of data.