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A GFMER program



## Activity report 2023 Fistula Group program

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Dr Jim Peabody and Dr Guy Kikwaya - "Mission Tanguiéta" April 2023

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# Editorial



Dr Charles-Henry Rochat

**"THE SURGICAL WORKSHOPS ARE THE LINCHPINS OF OUR PROGRAMMES, OFFERING NOT ONLY FREE PROCEDURES, BUT ALSO OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMPAGNONNAGE WHERE KNOWLEDGE IS TRANSMITTED DIRECTLY".**

The year 2023 was marked by a series of significant events and developments.

On the front of surgical missions organized or supported by GFMER/Fistula Group, **nearly 200 patients have been operated on in Benin, Burkina Faso and Cameroon.** Surgical workshops are the backbone of our programs, offering not only free operations, but also opportunities for mentoring where knowledge is passed on live.

In Benin, Dr. Jean de Dieu YUNGA FOMA currently holds the position of regulator (focal point) for missions across the country, under the aegis of the Ministry of Health and in partnership with the Claudine Talon Foundation. Dr. YUNFA FOMA is an international expert in obstetric fistula surgery and is present at all the missions organized in Tanguiéta.

In Burkina Faso, operations are led in Ouagadougou by Dr Moussa GUIRO, with recruitment support from Sentinelles Lausanne.

Due to the closure of the border between Burkina Faso and Benin, patients from the east of the country are referred to Ouagadougou instead of Tanguiéta.

In Cameroon, Professor Pierre Marie TEBEU heads the missions in Yaoundé. Professor TEBEU, a former intern in Geneva, is currently Director General of the Centre Inter-états de Santé Publique d'Afrique Centrale (CIESPAC) in Brazzaville. In August 2023, GFMER/Fistula Group and CIESPAC signed a partnership agreement in Geneva for a program to eradicate obstetric fistula in West and Central Africa by 2030. The first surgical workshop is scheduled to take place in Chad and Central Africa in 2024.

As far as Tanguiéta Hospital is concerned, during my visit in March/April, I had the opportunity to talk to the management and doctors to define the strategy for 2030.

On the financial and administrative front, a certified audit report was published at the beginning of the year. The hospital



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**"THESE COMBINED EFFORTS GIVE GFMER/FISTULA GROUP THE IMPETUS IT NEEDS TO CONTINUE ITS WORK."**

was impacted by the two years of the Covid-19 pandemic and deteriorating security conditions on the border with Burkina Faso, which led to a drop in attendance and paid consultations. In addition, the deficit in the indigent fund has worsened, as seriously ill patients often arrive late and without financial resources.

As a charitable institution, the Tanguiéta hospital offers care to patients, even though it is known that they will not be able to contribute financially to treatments or operations. The Geneva-based IF Foundation is exploring ways to help in this respect, which is a ray of hope for the hospital.

The quality of care depends on the skills of our medical specialists and their working conditions. In 2023, we introduced bonuses for clinical management, thanks to the support of the Inspi'r Foundation, which also awarded specialization scholarships to young doctors. With a view to attracting more senior doctors, an operating room was equipped for laparoscopic surgery and live video-conferencing.

Finally, a budget has been allocated for the renovation of the clinic building, to improve accommodation conditions for patients coming from Cotonou or elsewhere for specialized operations. The TOPAZE Foundation has been supporting Swiss surgeons' programs for 20 years.

The Global Foundation For Health Sciences has supported us for the past three years, following the withdrawal of the City of Geneva. This support has enabled us to restructure as we face the most difficult challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020.

Fortunately, private donors and foundations have also contributed to our cause. These include the Baur Foundation, the McCall & McBain Foundation, the Stiftung Foundation, the Lotti Latrous Foundation, the Rumsey Cartier Foundation, the Pharos Trusts Foundation and the Agape Foundation.

These combined efforts give GFMER/ Fistula Group the impetus it needs to continue its work. Recognition of our serious, training-oriented work has led to our inclusion in international scientific committees. In 2023, I had the opportunity to speak at congresses of the Fédération des Associations et Sociétés d'Urologie de Langue Française (FASULF), the International Federation of Gynecologists and Obstetricians (FIGO), of which I am a member of the Fistula Committee, and the Association Française d'Urologie (AFU). This scientific aspect is essential, because conscience without science would be the ruin of a humanist's soul!

Dr Charles-Henry Rochat  
Specialist in surgical urology

# Surgical Workshops

Tanguiéta, Bénin



Rapport de mission du  
Dr Charles-Henry Rochat  
3 au 15 avril 2023

Cover of the mission report written by Dr. Charles-Henry Rochat, available on the Fistula Group website.



## BENIN

### **FISTULA GROUP MISSION to Benin: April 3-15, 2023**

21 cases of obstetric fistulas and/or perineal tears  
6 urogenital prolapses  
6 cases of complex urethral stenosis in men  
1 case of prostatic hypertrophy

# Surgical Workshops

At Saint Jean de Dieu Hospital in Tanguiéta, fistula surgery is performed "routinely" throughout the year by Dr Renaud Aholou. In addition, specialized missions are organized for complex cases, involving national and international experts. In 2023, we can highlight :

- enhanced management of male urology cases (prostate operations, urethral strictures and urinary calculi).
  - setting up a laparoscopy platform for general surgery, gynecology and pediatric surgery, as well as for the development of operative hysteroscopy (gynecology).
  - support for hospital specialists in clinical supervision.
  - maintenance of training grants and involvement of grant-holders in missions.
  - financial support for the creation of a new sterilization unit in the operating theatre, the renovation of the clinic building and the promotion of the hospital on a regional level.
- a Cotonou
- strengthening cooperation with the CNHU (national university hospital center) in Cotonou (gynecology and urology).
  - maintaining links with the Ministry of Health and the Claudine Talon Foundation.



Nadine Piatkowski, operating theatre nurse technician, 20 years of missions in Tanguiéta



# Surgical Workshops



Cover of the mission report written by Dr Aholou, available on the Fistula Group website.

## BENIN (CONTINUED)



### **FISTULA GROUP MISSION in Benin November 2023**

- 21 cases of obstetric fistulas and/or perineal tears
- 6 urogenital prolapses
- 6 cases of complex urethral stenosis in men
- 1 case of prostatic hypertrophy

# Surgical Workshops

Another mission to provide free surgery for women with obstetric fistulas (OF) took place from October 23 to 28, 2023 at the Hôpital Saint Jean de Dieu in Tan-guiéta, thanks to a partnership between the Ministry of Health, the Geneva Foundation for Medical Training and Research (GFMER) and its Fistula Group program, and the Claudine Talon Foundation.

29 patients were mobilized in advance by the Claudine TALON Foundation and the Essor NGO and cared for by a team made up of expert surgeons from the Fistula Group, local doctors and doctors in training:

- Dr Jean de Dieu YUNGA FOMA
- Dr Renaud AHOLOU
- Dr Gilbert FASSINO
- Dr Hadidjatou OUAKE

But also:

- 4 D.E.S. in urology from Cotonou
- 2 D.E.S. in general surgery from Parakou
- 3 general practitioners from the Tanguiéta obstetrics and gynecology department



Companions sleeping in the courtyard of Hôpital Saint Jean de Dieu

# Surgical Workshops



## CAMEROON

In Cameroon, as in the other CEMAC member countries (Central African Republic, Republic of Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Chad), the management of obstetric fistulas suffers from a lack of awareness, material and financial resources, as well as a shortage of qualified human resources. reliable and competent.

Two missions led by Prof. Tebeu took place this year. Their aim was to surgically treat women suffering from fistulas, prolapse and urinary incontinence. A total of 25 women underwent surgery during the campaign.



## BURKINA FASO

The treatment strategy adopted in this facility is "the routine case management" which involves managing patients as and when they are admitted, using in-house expertise. Patients come from health facilities, direct consultation with doctors, midwives or fistula associations (Rama Foundation, Sentinelles, etc.).

Within the framework of socio-economic reintegration and follow-up, the associations monitor patients after their return to the village, and provide the medical team with information on the results of the operations, either by telephone or at meetings.

**For the whole of 2023, a total of 121 patients underwent surgery, with a 94.22% success rate at discharge and 3.31% incontinence, which will gradually be resolved by perineal re-education sessions.**



# Surgical Workshops



Patients came mainly from the eastern and Sahelian regions, which are subject to a high level of insecurity, impacting on the use of health services.



# Scholarship Program

**The scholarship program is long-term and covers several years.**



Dr. Maurel M'PO, a Fistula Group scholarship holder, defended his doctorate thesis in medicine on Monday December 11, 2023 at the University of Parakou (Benin), obtaining the "Very Honorable" distinction.



Dr. Staline ADISSO, Fistula Group scholarship holder, on an internship in Cômè D.E.S 4 - obstetrics and gynecology.



# Scholarship Program



2023 celebrated the third year of urological surgery specialization in Dakar for Dr Martin RANDRIANTSALAMA.



In 2023, we have introduced bonuses for the clinical supervision of senior doctors.



# Long-Term Actions

## OUR PARTNERS

Fistula Group has multiplied its cooperation agreements.



In Europe :

- Artemedis Foundation
- Sentinelles with 13 years of collaboration for fistula management in Burkina Faso.



In Africa :

- to relay work on site, promote training for local doctors, and organize surgical workshops
- to inform the public and prepare missions in advance.

This work is accomplished thanks to :

- at the Claudine Talon Foundation.
- local NGOs: ESSOR (Benin) - Sentinelles (Burkina Faso) - OCEAC and CIESPAC (Central Africa) - SALFA (Madagascar) - Engender Health (Guinea Conakry).
- to local university hospitals.



In the World

**ISOFS:** International Society of Obstetric Fistula Surgeons (Asia-Africa).

**FIGO:** International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics.

**FISTULA FOUNDATION** (Initially in Africa, but also in Asia).

**UNFPA:** United Nations lead agency for sexual and reproductive health.

**WHO:** Department of Reproductive Health.

**OFWG:** International Obstetric Fistula Working Group.

**The involvement of parapublic institutions is important.** Our work with the Claudine Talon Foundation, the foundation of the First Lady of Benin, is a case in point.

**Raising awareness among the authorities and the general public is** also an important part of the Fistula Group's joint work with international and local NGOs.

# Scientific Committees

**Recognition of our serious, training-oriented work has led to our inclusion in international scientific committees.**



Dr Rochat's presentation at the Journée d'andrologie et de médecine sexuelle 2023 / AFU, Association Française d'Urologie



Dr Rochat to attend the FIGO World Congress on October 11, 2023 (Obstetrical Fistula Committee)



# Partnership



## SIGNATURE OF AN AGREEMENT WITH CIESPAC



06.08.2022

Stepping up the fight against obstetric fistula in Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and Chad

GFMER, through the Fistula Group program, has invited Prof. Pierre-Marie Tebeu to Geneva in July 2023 to finalize the signing of an agreement with CIESPAC.

The main aim of this 5-year renewable agreement is to set up surgical workshops in the various CIESPAC countries, with the participation of operators from the various countries identified as future trainers.

This initiative is part of the Brazzaville Declaration of May 23, 2023, which aims to "eliminate obstetric fistula in the CEMAC zone by 2030", and which entrusted Prof. Tebeu with the mission of structuring obstetric fistula management in the countries in which he is a referent.

The agreement begins with the identification of a focal point in each country to set up the surgical workshops.



Prof. Pierre-Marie TEBEU and Dr Charles-Henry ROCHAT in Geneva



# Awareness and Training

## Laparoscopy has become a hospital reality at Saint Jean De Dieu in TANGUIÉTA.



April 2023

Laparoscopy is an operating technique that enables surgery to be performed with a closed abdomen, i.e. without large incisions.

An endoscope is introduced through the navel. CO<sub>2</sub> is blown into the abdominal cavity to create a space (pneumoperitoneum) for panoramic vision. Instruments are introduced into the abdomen through small 5 mm holes.

In 2022, it was decided to develop a program of laparoscopy and operative hysteroscopy, with Drs. Gayito, Aholou and Azakapa, respectively a general surgeon, gynecologist and pediatric surgeon, all with experience in laparoscopy.

Laparoscopy requires CO<sub>2</sub>, which until now has been a limiting factor. This gas is now produced in Cotonou, solving supply problems.



1st laparoscopic operation in Tanguiéta in April 2023

# Awareness and Training

## GOLDEN JUBILEE CELEBRATION AT SAINT JEAN DE DIEU HOSPITAL IN TANGUIÉTA (HSJD)



28.09.2023

As part of the Golden Jubilee celebrations at Saint Jean de Dieu hospital in Tanguiéta, a virtual round table was organized on the theme of "30 years of humanitarian cooperation for the benefit of the sick".

Fistula Group was present through the participation of Dr Charles-Henry Rochat. HSJD humanitarian aid workers were given the opportunity to share their experience of caring for the sick.



Jubilee logo

# Capsules

A BEHIND-THE-SCENES LOOK AT SURGICAL MISSIONS THROUGH VIDEO CAPSULES.



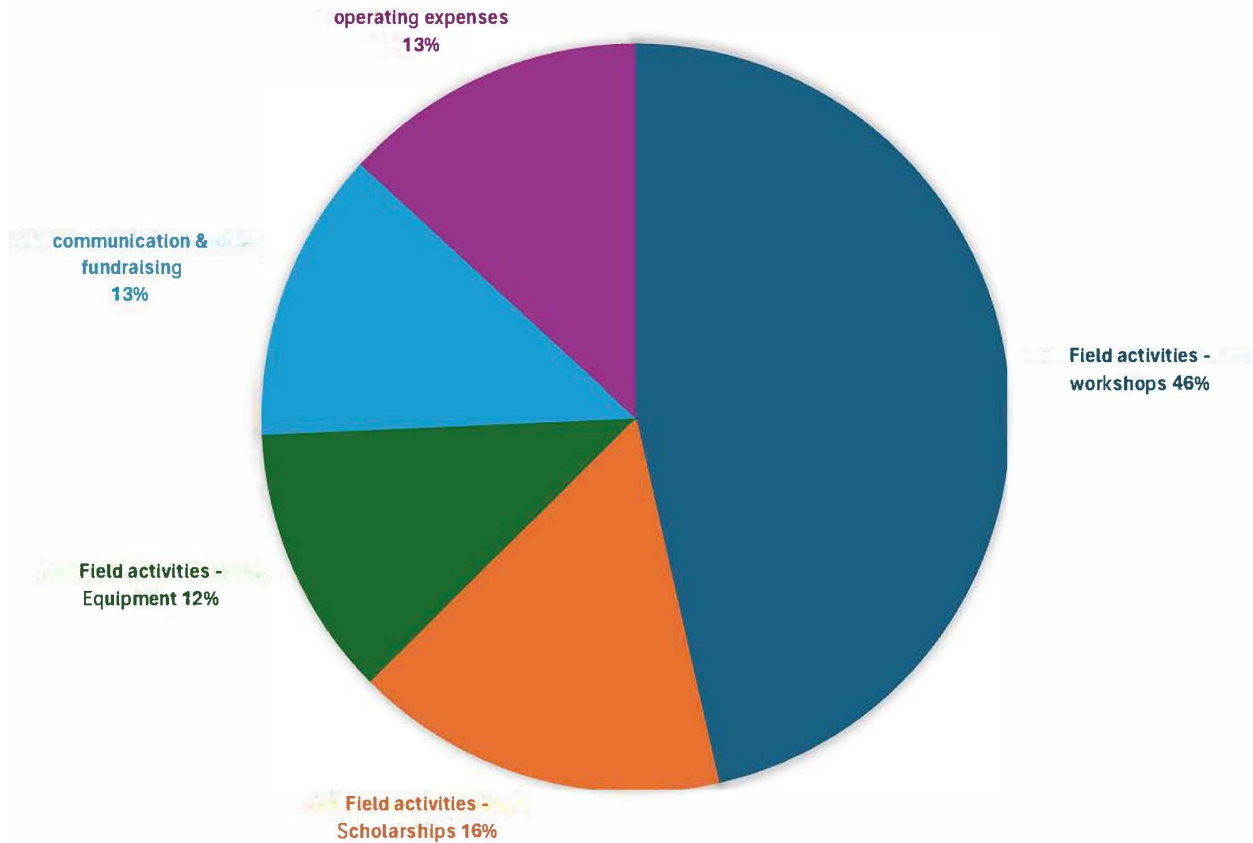
April.2023

For the first time, it was possible to experience the mission of the GFMER Foundation's Fistula Group program in Tanguiéta, in April 2023, through these 5 capsules produced by Dr Rochat and published on the Fistula Group Youtube channel,





# Breakdown of expenditure



## CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

### CLINIC BUILDING RENOVATION

A budget has been allocated to renovate the clinic building, to improve accommodation conditions for patients coming from Cotonou or elsewhere for specialized operations.

**WORKSHOPS  
AND TRAINING**

**CHF135300.-**

**BENIN: 2 CAMPAIGNS  
CAMEROON: 2 CAMPAIGNS  
BURKINA FASO: ANNUAL**

**BOURSES**

**CHF47000.-**

**MAINLY  
IN BENIN AND SENEGAL**

**MATERIAL**

**CHF34200.-**

**SHIPMENT OF SURGICAL  
MATERIAL,  
ENDOSCOPIC, UROLOGICAL,  
AND VIDEOTRANSMISSION**

**COMMUNICATION  
& FUNDRAISING**

**CHF36500.00**

**EDITORIAL CONTENT  
WEBSITE  
DOC. COMMUNICATION  
PLAQUETTES  
INFORMATIVES  
FUNDRAISING**

**CHF38400.-**

**OPERATION**

# Thanks

Fistula Group would like to thank all the donors associated with the "obstetric fistula" program who have made these actions possible:

## Foundations

Topaze Fondation

Albatros Fondation

Baur

Fondation Rumsey Cartier

Fondation Genolier

Fondation Fauvette

Global Foundation for Life Sciences

The Pharos Trust foundation

Inspir Foundation

Loyal private donors.

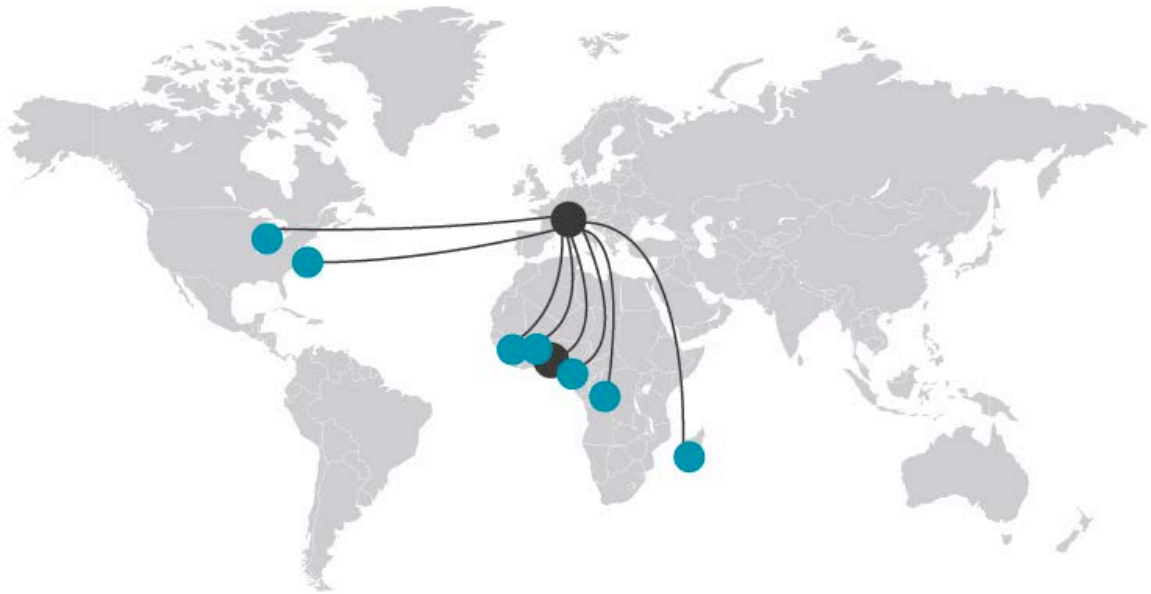
The Foundation would also like to thank Medtronic and Anklin for their material support.



Renovation of clinic building



# Across the world



## Switzerland

Fistula Group (Geneva) / GFMER and Sentinelles headquarters in Lausanne.



## Benin

Tanguiéta Hospital and Faculty of Health Sciences (FSS)



## New York (USA)

Albert Einstein College of Medicine, a collaboration spanning more than 10 years.



## Detroit (USA)

Collaboration with Henry Ford Hospital, Detroit, in particular Dr James Peabody, urologist and co-chairman.



## Guinea Conakry

Cooperation via AFOA (Association des Fistules Obstétricales d'Afrique) and Engender Health with Dr Jérôme Blanchot and Dr Jean-Marie Colas.



## Burkina Faso

Collaboration with Dr Moussa Guiro for operations carried out in Ouagadougou.



## Cameroon

Collaboration with Prof. Pierre-Marie Tébeu for operating missions in Yaoundé and Central Africa.



## Congo Brazaville

Headquarters of CIESPAC, GFMER partner.



## Madagascar

Collaboration with SALFA.

# Fistula Group



NICOLAS CLEUET

RESTORE DIGNITY TO ALL WOMEN



**Fistula Group, a GFMER program**

Geneva Foundation for Medical Education and Research

**Public interest foundation**

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