

# TRANSPORTMYPATIENT: FACILITATING ACCESS TO TREATMENT FOR OBSTETRIC FISTULAE



## BRIEF OVERVIEW

The World Health Organization estimates that approximately two million women live with fistula worldwide and that an additional 50,000–100,000 women are affected each year. In Tanzania alone, approximately 2,500–3,000 new cases of fistula are estimated to occur annually. Many girls and women with fistulae must travel more than 500 km to reach one of the major centers for fistula repair, with some travelling as far as 1000 km.

Comprehensive Community Based Rehabilitation in Tanzania (CCBRT) set up the transportMYpatient initiative at the end of 2009 in order to tackle a significant barrier preventing patients with fistula from accessing health services: the cost of transport. Other barriers to accessing treatment include the cost of medical treatment itself and lodging, which are already provided free at the CCBRT Disability Hospital in Dar es Salaam to obstetric fistula patients.

The transportMYpatient initiative mobilizes CCBRT Ambassadors to detect and refer patients with obstetric fistulae and utilizes mobile phone technology to transfer funds through Vodafone's M-PESA service to cover transport costs.

## ABOUT TRANSPORTMYPATIENT

transportMYpatient uses a network of CCBRT's Ambassadors: doctors, nurses, other healthcare workers, non-governmental organization staff or members of the general public living in the community all over Tanzania, who are aware of the services offered by CCBRT. The network was established in early 2010 through a CCBRT outreach team who searched for appropriate individuals to serve as case finders/ Ambassadors.

The transportMYpatient initiative works through the following steps:

- The CCBRT Call Centre Assistant receives phone calls from Ambassadors, potential patients or their family members. Callers are asked a series of screening questions by a CCBRT doctor to confirm the diagnosis of obstetric fistula. The Call Centre Assistant links confirmed obstetric fistula patients to their closest Ambassador, if they are not in communication already.
- The Ambassador sends details of the transport costs required to send the patient to CCBRT. After approval from Program Management, the fare is sent to the Ambassador via mobile phone through Vodafone's M-PESA technology. The Ambassador collects the cash at the nearest M-PESA agent (there are over 6000 M-PESA agents in Tanzania), purchases a bus ticket, and arranges for the patient to travel to CCBRT Disability Hospital in Dar es Salaam.
- Once the patient's journey has begun, the Ambassador informs CCBRT of the bus number and provides the phone number of the bus conductor to the Program Team to facilitate tracking of the patient during their journey in order to ensure their safety. Obstetric fistula patients are met at the bus stand in Dar es Salaam and are accompanied to CCBRT Disability Hospital.

Ambassadors receive an incentive of TSH 10,000 for each patient that successfully arrives at CCBRT with the correct transport receipts.

## EVALUATION AND RESULTS

Since 2010, 725 women suffering from fistula were transported to CCBRT via the transportMYpatient initiative. The number of annual surgeries at CCBRT has increased by more than 300% from 162 in 2009 to 501 in 2012, largely due to the transportMYpatient scheme.

In 2012, 90% of patients reported that they were dry six months after their operation and 96% said that they were fully reintegrated into their communities. This rate of recovery and reintegration means that patients were able to take part in activities they enjoyed before developing obstetric fistula and were able to associate with their peers as they used to.

presenter of Radio FADECO (a community radio in Kagera) became a CCBRT Ambassador. In 2012, Kagera Region had the highest number of referrals in the country.

## CONCLUSION

CCBRT is now considering ways to expand the ambassador network to locate more 'hard to reach' individuals living with obstetric fistulae, including asking successfully treated patients to be ambassadors. CCBRT is also developing a National Strategic Plan to enable all women suffering from fistula to access the life changing surgery.

## GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE

Tanzania

## IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS

Comprehensive Community Based Rehabilitation in Tanzania (CCBRT) | The Government of Tanzania

## FUNDER

The Vodafone Foundation (main funder)

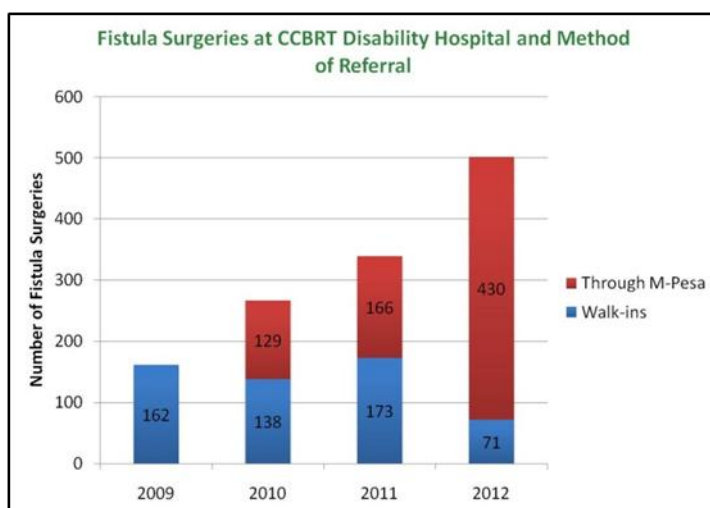
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## LESSONS LEARNED

- In 2012, CCBRT observed that recruiting community radio presenters as Ambassadors has the potential to tremendously increase the number of patients who come to the hospital for treatment. This is evidenced by the increase in the number of patients travelling from the Kagera Region after the

### Information was excerpted from:

CCBRT progress report on the VVF Programme. Vodafone Foundation. January-December 2012. Web.  
Fiander, Alison, and Tom Vanneste. "transportMYpatient: An Initiative to Overcome the Barrier of Transport Costs for Patients Accessing Treatment for Obstetric Fist." Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. n.d. Web.  
CCBRT. Comprehensive Community Based Rehabilitation in Tanzania. n.d. Web.

# LOGISTICS

