

HEALING HANDS OF  JOY



2023

ANNUAL
REPORT

HEALING HANDS OF  JOY

Our *Vision* is to eliminate obstetric fistula in Ethiopia by ensuring all women achieve safe motherhood.

Our *Mission* is to improve maternal child healthcare in Ethiopia to eliminate preventable childbirth injuries including obstetric fistula.



Letter from our Co-Founder & CEO

Dear Friends,

We want to thank you for your partnership and support during 2023 while we worked through a civil war, galloping inflation and post-Covid upheaval in Ethiopia. The hard times have strengthened our organization and resolve to end obstetric fistula in Ethiopia and bring Safe Motherhood to women and their babies.

Thanks to your provision, we've been able to emerge from the devastating circumstances of the civil war in northern Ethiopia and reestablish our work in order to restore lives. Sadly, maternal mortality and cases of obstetric fistula have risen due to the ravages of war, destruction of rural Health Centers and lack of basic maternal healthcare. Trauma, food insecurity, and hundreds of cases of gender based violence are emerging from the tragic consequences of this conflict.

After 3 long years, I was finally able to return safely to the Tigray Region and travel with our incredible staff to see first-hand the aftermath of the conflict. We visited Safe Motherhood Ambassador Nigisty and her family. During the war, her family had to leave their homes and seek refuge in caves amidst heavy bombings. Food and water were scarce. Nigisty witnessed many women giving birth in the caves without the support of healthcare professionals or equipment, which often resulted in obstetric fistula and infant death. Once the conflict ended, they returned to their village to discover that looters had taken everything they owned. You'll learn more in this report about Nigisty's courageous outreach in her community despite the overwhelming challenges she faced.

We are so thankful for your response to our call to action to reopen our rehabilitation center for women recovering from fistula and gender based violence, and provide emergency food support and supplies to health facilities across the region. We've relaunched a 4-year partnership with the Regional Health Bureau and have been able to support over 100 women at our Mekelle Center and 100 families of formally trained Safe Motherhood Ambassadors across the Region.

Despite the conflict and state of emergency declared in the Amhara Region, our teams safely rehabilitated and trained 93 Safe Motherhood Ambassadors, conducted 50 pregnant women conferences and renovated two maternity waiting rooms.

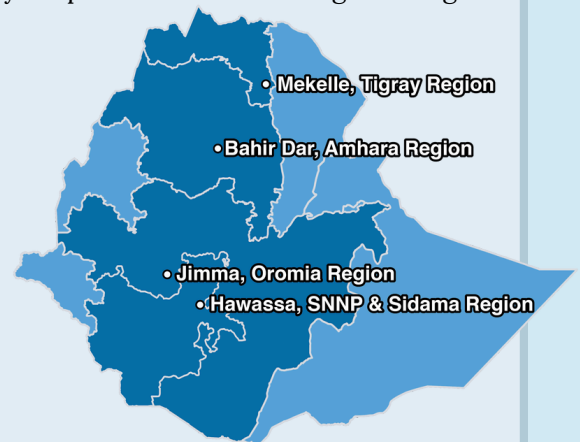
With your support, we've been able to celebrate the achievements and growth of our work in Southern Ethiopia where our Safe Motherhood Ambassadors identified over 42 women living with fistula. To encourage women to deliver at the Health Center safely, we launched a new program to renovate maternity waiting rooms and opened several across the region for expecting Moms. In the Oromia Region we celebrated the 2nd Anniversary of our work and partnership with Jimma University Hospital, identifying 37 new cases of fistula and training 116 Safe Motherhood Ambassadors.

We are so grateful for your continued partnership and support that has helped us make an impact in the lives of women across Ethiopia.

Many thanks,

Allison Shigo

Co-Founder, CEO



LAUNCHING OUR 2023-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN

To improve childbirth outcomes and assist those affected by lack of access to institutional healthcare, Healing Hands of Joy implemented a new strategic plan in 2023 with four key objectives. Our holistic approach includes education, strengthening existing healthcare structures, ensuring women thrive after treatment, and aiding those impacted by civil unrest and the devastating repercussions of war. Healing Hands of Joy continues to fine tune intervention projects to best suit the needs of an ever-changing landscape of challenges. Below are the results of our first year implementing this new strategy.



Our Objectives:

Increase in the utilization of key maternal health services in HHOJ's operational districts

PREGNANT WOMEN ATTENDING PREGNANT WOMEN CONFERENCES

13,404

PEOPLE REACHED WITH MESSAGES ABOUT OBSTETRIC FISTULA

331,900

STUDENTS EDUCATED WITH SCHOOL AWARENESS EVENTS

48,084

COMMUNITY PARTNER WORKSHOPS ATTENDEES

1,225

SAFE MOTHERHOOD AMBASSADORS WHO JOINED LOCAL HEALTH ADVOCACY GROUPS

173



Improve the Quality of Care at Rural Community Health Centers



HEALTH PROFESSIONALS TRAINED ON OBSTETRIC FISTULA DIAGNOSIS, USE OF EQUIPMENT

102

MATERNITY WAITING ROOMS RENOVATED AT RURAL HEALTHCARE CENTERS

7

PREGNANT WOMEN WHO RECEIVED PRENATAL CARE IN HHOJ'S MATERNITY WAITING ROOMS SINCE THE PROGRAM LAUNCHED IN 2022

1,512

LAUNCHING OUR 2023-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN

Our Objectives

Ensure Successful Rehabilitation & Reintegration After Treatment for Obstetric Fistula

WOMEN RECEIVED REHABILITATION SUPPORT AND SAFE MOTHERHOOD AMBASSADOR TRAINING	334	WOMEN PROVIDED ECONOMIC SUPPORT	129
INDIVIDUALIZED REINTEGRATION SUPPORT AND FOLLOW-UP	175	NEW CASES OF OBSTETRIC FISTULA IDENTIFIED	111



Emergency and Rehabilitation Support for Conflict Affected Areas

PREGNANT WOMEN WHO ATTENDED PREGNANT WOMEN CONFERENCES AT INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE SITES	920		
SAFE MOTHERHOOD AMBASSADORS WHO RECEIVED EMERGENCY FOOD SUPPORT	100	WOMEN RECEIVED REHABILITATIVE CARE THROUGH THE TRAUMA & HEALING PROGRAM	93
HEALTH CENTERS PROVIDED SUPPORT	7	CLINICS IN IDP SITES SUPPORTED WITH BASIC MATERNAL HEALTH SERVICE SUPPLIES	2

TIGRAY REGIONAL REPORT: POST-CONFLICT RESTORATION



THE AFTERMATH

Before the war, Healing Hands of Joy brought the incidence of obstetric fistula in Tigray down from 1.6% to 0.3% over the span of 2010 - 2019.

- Maternal Mortality Rate pre war: 180/100,000
Today there are 840 deaths per 100,000 live births.
- 120,000 women experienced gender-based violence.

Today the incidence is 2.6%. We are committed to lowering this number once more with our proven model.

Nigisty had no choice but to rebuild her life for a second time since graduating the Safe Motherhood Ambassador program in 2019. Healing Hands of Joy ensured her financial security by purchasing livestock to generate income, freeing her up to join the local health advocacy group and resume her advocacy work. She is currently advising 30 pregnant women and supporting eight women to deliver at health facilities. She even walked for 3 hours to convince a woman to start prenatal care. She is actively engaged in conducting pregnant women conferences in collaboration with health extension workers, and has led 10 conferences since May 2023, educating hundreds of women about maternal healthcare.



MEKELLE REHABILITATION CENTER REOPENING

Tigray endured unimaginable hardship throughout the three-year conflict in the region concluding in late 2022. Much of the infrastructure, from hospitals to entire villages, had been destroyed. Healing Hands of Joy was eager to begin restoration work as soon as we were permitted in the region in early 2023.

Disturbingly, a number of current obstetric fistula cases are the result of gender-based violence. This horror, combined with the severe hardship of living through a war has compounded issues for women. Healing Hands of Joy is addressing the need for intensive psychological counseling through the newly developed Trauma and Healing program.



HEALING HANDS OF JOY CELEBRATES 2 YEARS OF OPERATIONS IN THE OROMIA REGION

When the HHoJ Oromia rehabilitation center opened two years ago, there were no prevention, identification, or reintegration services in the region. As a result of our intervention, **“The fistula case load has increased gradually and we are repairing many patients currently. This is from the great effort made by [HHoJ] to enable the Safe Motherhood Ambassadors to mobilize and facilitate the referral of obstetric fistula cases in appropriate time,”** according to Dr. Demissew, an associate professor of OBGYN, and reconstructive pelvic surgeon from Jimma University hospital.

As of July 2023, 71.6% of obstetric fistula cases Jimma University treated were found and brought to treatment by Healing Hands of Joy’s Safe Motherhood Ambassadors.

“Fistula repair is a small portion of the management of obstetric fistula cases. Rehabilitation and training enables them to overcome the challenges and complications that arise from obstetric fistula. In the past we were facing challenges with some fistula patients who didn’t want to go home even after they had healed because of their fractured families and hopelessness regarding the prospect of reunification. **These problems are solved now.”**



2 Years of Progress

Prevention

2,714 pregnant women attended Pregnant Women conferences

9,534 students attended School Awareness events

Rehabilitation and Reintegration

116 women received rehabilitation and Safe Motherhood Ambassador training

105 male family members received training in reintegration and Safe Motherhood Ambassador activities support

448 community leaders attended Awareness and Sensitivity workshops

54 Safe Motherhood Ambassadors received reintegration follow-up support

41 Safe Motherhood Ambassadors received in-kind economic support

THE HHOJ HEROES OF THE SOUTHERN REGION



BONTU
**THE COMMITTED
SCHOLAR AND
ADVOCATE**

Bontu was forced to quit going to school in the fifth grade due to her case of obstetric fistula. **“Life with fistula was so difficult. I want to be like Safe Motherhood Ambassador Rametie, who found me and brought me to treatment.”** In addition to being an active Safe Motherhood Ambassador in her community, Bontu works closely with local health workers to educate pregnant women on the signs and prevention of obstetric fistula.

She has connected 10 women in need of medical care to treatment; 6 of which were confirmed cases of obstetric fistula. Healing Hands of Joy provided Bontu with 7 goats to keep her financially secure.

She has resumed her education now that she is rehabilitated, having already reached the 8th grade in one year’s time.



DINGETE
**THE NEXT
GENERATION OF
HEALTHCARE**

Safe Motherhood Ambassador Dingete was only 16 years old when she entered into an arranged marriage and became pregnant with her first child, resulting in obstetric fistula for 9 years.

After treatment and graduating from the Safe Motherhood Ambassador program, she volunteered at her local health post, focusing on educating her community on safe childbirth practices.

Her Safe Motherhood Ambassador work inspired her to become a medical professional, and with Healing Hands of Joy’s help, she has completed her primary education. She is now enrolled in a Health Science College made possible by Healing Hands of Joy financial assistance, and we can’t wait to see her future career in healthcare.



SEMENESH
**THE DETERMINED
PATHFINDER AND
RESCUER**

Semenesh (on the right) has always been one of HHOJ’s most passionate Safe Motherhood Ambassadors. She had been abducted and forced into marriage at just 13 years old and developed obstetric fistula; living with the condition for 9 years.

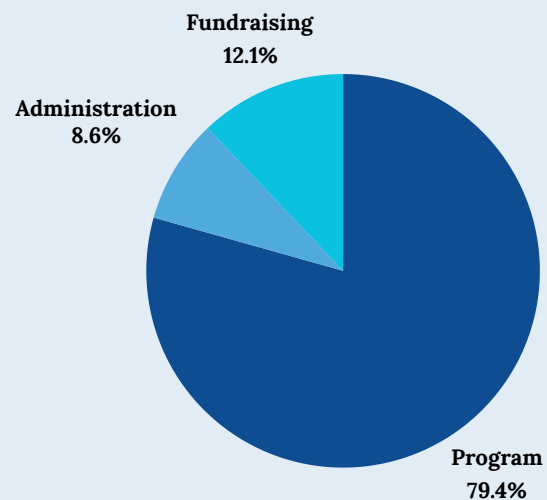
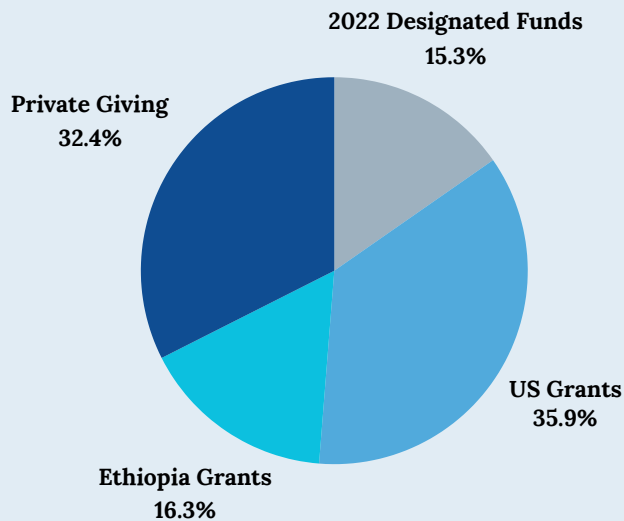
After treatment and upon graduation of the Safe Motherhood Ambassador program, she said **“My stay in HHOJ center was fruitful. Now I am happy, my hope has grown, and I am ready to teach my community.”**

She has identified 13 women with fistula and brought them to treatment. Using her personal testimony as proof that a better, healthier life is possible, she persuaded a young woman to travel with her on a two and a half day journey from the Kenyan border to the Hawassa center.

2023 FINANCIAL REPORT

2023 Income: \$1,468,958

2023 Expenses: \$1,528,487



LOOKING AHEAD: 2024 GOALS

Healing Hands of Joy is committed to our **Safe Motherhood Ambassador program** work this year, including restoring our network of SMAs in the Tigray Region as well as continuing to supply **critically needed emergency food and medical supply support** to conflict-affected areas. Our **community outreach work** in rural health care centers, schools and villages will inform and mobilize communities to prevent and identify new fistula cases. To ensure pregnant women have a safe place for prenatal care and delivery, we will continue to **renovate maternity waiting homes** at healthcare centers throughout rural Ethiopia while facilitating **fistula diagnosis training** for healthcare professionals.



With your support, we can achieve these goals.

Ethiopia continues to experience galloping inflation, which has adversely affected the reach of our funding. Our team in Ethiopia is strategic and nimble in the face of these challenges, but we still need more help to realize the full potential of our program.

To bring us one step closer to eliminating childbirth injuries like obstetric fistula in Ethiopia, scan the barcode to the right and donate today.



OUR STAFF

Our inspiration comes from the unconditional love of God and His call to bring healing and joy to those who suffer as exemplified by Jesus Christ. We are committed to working with partners and individuals of all faiths and beliefs.

United States	Allison Shigo Co-Founder & CEO	Rachel Ayers Operations & Development Manager		
Addis Ababa	Meselech Seyoum Country Director Head Office	Temesgen Asmare Finance and Administration Head Office	Elisabeth Teffera Program Supervisor Head Office	Yordanos Mamo Accountant Head Office
Amhara	Lidet Kassie Regional Technical Advisor	Solomon Kemaw Community Outreach Officer	Anteneh Workie Project Officer	Tilahun Addis Finance Officer
Oromia	Zerihun Bayabil Regional Technical Advisor	Wudineh Belachew Finance Officer	Assefa Gonfa Community Outreach Officer	
SNNP & Sidama	Shimelis Mitiku Regional Technical Advisor	Zewudie Nigus Project Officer	Tatek Tesfaye Finance Officer	Amanuel Meru Community Outreach Officer
Tigray	Senait Tarekegn Regional Technical Advisor	Fisseha Hagos Abera Project Officer	Birhane Gebregzeabher Finance Officer	

OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dan Ward Chair	Allison Shigo Director & Co-Founder	Cindy Breilh Director	<p>Welcome: Karen Dealey</p>  <p>A seasoned Finance Executive with extensive experience in the financial services sector; Karen Dealey offers technical accounting and auditing skills. We are thrilled to have her join the Board of Directors of Healing Hands of Joy.</p>
Amy Olson Vice Chair	Keith Hendrix Treasurer	Susan Goode Director	
Tim Teusink Second Vice Chair	Kimberly Williams Secretary	Nigest Haile Director	

A SPECIAL THANK YOU To Terri Hart, Leah Pedersen Thomas, and Susan Rankin for their many fruitful years of board service.



Thank you to our generous donors for making this life-changing work a reality. Together we can prevent childbirth injuries and eliminate obstetric fistula in Ethiopia for once and for all.

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Thank you for
supporting Healing
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