

Uganda Childbirth Injury Fund

Newsletter December 2016

Registered UK Charity No 1099135

A charity to cure by surgery women made incontinent though complications in childbirth and other surgical procedures.

Dear Supporter

The end of the year has come around again, and I we are pleased to report that Mhairi and her team have once again taken part in and sponsored five fistula repair camps in Uganda.

We still have not seen a reduction in cases since we started regular visits in 2000, but the pattern is changing. Government medical services have improved, and more ladies with complicated labour are getting to hospital. So, we are pleased to see less of the ladies who have laboured at home without help and therefore suffered the worst injuries, but unfortunately more patients who had their bladder injured at Caesarean operation. This is sad but understandable because government hospital are so poorly staffed and inexperienced doctors have to deal with complications that would be a challenge to any specialist in the UK. In addition we now see several patients who have had an elective hysterectomy for cancer or fibroids and suffered a bladder injury, again through lack of skill or facilities. Luckily both last two groups have an almost 100% cure rate in contrast to those with unaided birth injuries

During this year's visits we have consolidated our excellent working relationship with our Ugandan colleagues, first Dr Alphons Matovu who learnt his basic fistula surgery with us while he was medical superintendent at Kamuli and Ian Asiimwe who was already a good fistula surgeon when we were introduced to him last year.

Glyn Constantine and Brenda Gray have been key members of our team since Brenda first came out with Brian in 2004 and Glyn the following year. They

have given a wonderful service with over 15 visits and over 400 cases repaired, with very good results. They have decided it's time to retire and made their last visits this year. Their contribution was vital in making our work sustainable as they bridged the gap between Brian retiring and Mhairi being free to restart her visits.



Glyn, Hatika, Ian, and Brenda the theatre team and Sebastian our faithful anaesthetist with Brenda



Glyn receives his plaque from Dr Andrew Muleledhu the medical superintendant.



We presented the sisters with an Icon of St Francis painted by Maureen Calnan one of our supporters in the UK. They were so happy to receive it.

Here Glyn gives his thoughts on his time in Uganda.

"March 2017 was the last time that Glyn and Brenda visited Kamuli to undertake VVF surgery. It was sad to say goodbye to everyone but Glyn having retired from his consultant post in the UK triggered that decision. It didn't seem fair to operate in Uganda once or twice a year without working in the UK in between.

Dr Ian Asiimwe from Hoima, who we had all worked with in Mubende, joined us and the hope is that he will be part of our ongoing team in Kamuli. He has a great deal of experience and is very competent. It's great to be working with Ugandan colleagues. One of Glyn's consultant colleagues, Honest Honest, from the UK also came to see what we had been doing out in Uganda and learn some of the techniques involved.

We operated on over 20 patients and the outcomes seemed good. When you have been going for so long changes happen bit by bit and it's not until you stop and take stock that they come into focus..... the changes in staff, new ward, new accommodation, the sad deterioration in the convent building, new (but very noisy!) air-conditioning in theatre..... the list goes on. The changes in Kamuli and Uganda with continued development, new roads and building has been very noticeable at each visit as well.

Unfortunately, Sebastian, our faithful anaesthetic nurse for so many years, has been very ill. We were so glad that he has recovered and were able to meet him. I think now rather like Prince Philip he has earned his retirement.

At the end of the week the hospital laid on a leaving party and we were both presented with beautiful plaques and certificates to mark our retirement. We were both touched and will treasure them as a constant reminder of very happy and rewarding times.

Its sad to leave but we both have many many happy memories of really rewarding experiences and wouldn't have missed our times helping the women of Uganda for anything.

We do hope that someday we might be able to return to Uganda and Kamuli as visitors to meet up again and see how things have developed further.

A special thanks to Sr Rose and her team of nurses, Dr Andrew and Fr Emmanuel for organising things, the UVP team (Loy and Hatika) and especially Dr Moses for looking after our patients so well”

Mhairi managed three camps this year.

In January she worked at Kitovu with Ian the second Ugandan member of our team, to work alongside Michael Breen a great teacher. With two tables running they managed 56 repairs in a week. Michael is a full-time fistula surgeon living in Zambia and we contribute to his fares, we greatly value learning from him. His book on fistula surgery is due out soon.

In June she and Kate Darlow were invited to a fistula camp in Hoima, Ian’s base hospital. This is a new area for us in North West Uganda where there is a great unmet need for repairs. With good team work an amazing 40 repairs were done in a week.

The final visit in October was a long and rewarding one. Mhairi took Cathrine Reimers the Norwegian member of our team and Ishbel our nurse to Mubende Government hospital where they worked with Alphons Matovu whom we had previously trained at Kamuli. The ward nurses are not fully up to speed in caring for fistula patients, so here Ishbel made a great contribution. Here she describes her work and one of the patients they cared for.

“I travelled to Mubende District Hospital with the fistula team in October to help improve the post-operative nursing care of our fistula patients. Fistula operations have been carried out in Mubende for the past 3 years but the nursing staff have had very little training in the specific care these patients need. Sister Prossy pictured with Ishbel is very keen to be involved with the fistula patients and was very receptive to going for fistula training and the extra support we can help her with during the camps. We are planning to send her with a very able nursing assistant ‘Rose’ to Kitovu hospital in January for training. Supporting the Ugandan nurses to deliver good quality nursing care to our fistula patients is one of the aims of UCIF with the hope that they will be able to run successful camps on their own.



Ishbel with Sr Prossy at Mubende

This is story of Justine, she is 19 years old. A year ago, she was expecting her first baby with her husband. Unfortunately, the baby got stuck during delivery, she was in labour for 6 days initially at home then in the Local Health Centre. By the time, she reached Mubende Hospital her baby had died and she had a caesarean to deliver her little boy. It transpired after recovering from her section that she had developed not only a VVF but also a recto-vaginal fistula. She returned home to her village to live with her mother incontinent of both urine and faeces. Her husband left her due to the bad smell. Her mother has been looking after her very well and she came to the camp for surgery. Unfortunately, by the time we arrived a repair of her RVF had been attempted but had failed to heal. She was taken to theatre for an examination under anaesthetic as she was still very tender from her recent op. It was decided her birthing injuries were so severe that she needs to attend Kitovu hospital, a bigger fistula centre that can deal with the difficult cases. Obviously, Justine was disappointed with the news but has agreed to attend the next camp in January with the hope of being cured. UCIF are covering all her expenses to send her there and get treatment. Sadly, not all ladies with severe injuries are cured on their first visit to a camp but many are dry after repeat attempts at surgery. It essential that the first operation is done by the most experienced surgeon possible.



Justine with Dr Alphons Matovu at Mubende

After this camp Mhairi was joined by her husband and two children for a well-earned holiday and visit to the game parks. They all then returned to Kamuli for a final week of operating. This time the mobilisation had been done well in advance and we were alarmed by the number of patients presenting. A record 49 operations were completed between Mahiri, Kate and Ian using two tables.

This is a tremendous load for our nurses but they have been well trained ably assisted by our midwife Christine and coped wonderfully. Christine spent time teaching and assisting at the Kamuli midwifery school. She also worked with traditional birth attendants and village safe motherhood education sessions. This is a Ugandan lead initiative working in our area they we support financially. All this will eventually lead to a reduction of these tragic injuries.

This year ended on a very happy note, Christine had the pleasure of delivering Johanta one of fistula nurses amid much rejoicing. The little girl is named after Christine!



Our lovely nurses at Kamuli. Johanta in the middle

We are most grateful to all out many supporters and donors. The Edinburgh team have been active with many fundraising and sponsored events and a special thanks to the Broadhaven Baptist Charity Shop in Pembroke who have continued its strong support. At long last Brian has had a chance to meet the key members and talk about our work at one of their Sunday services. We are very thankful to have continuing donations of sutures from Ethicon UK.

Finally, we are grateful to all the management and staff of Kamuli, Kitovu, Mubende and Hoima hospitals for making us so welcome to work in their hospitals. It is a privilege to be associated with such life changing work.

Our accounts and chairman's reports for the last five years are published on the Charity Commission website and you can see more news of our work on our website. www.ugandachildbirthinjuryfund.org

With our very best wishes for Christmas season and the New Year.

Brian Hancock and Mhairi Collie. Founders of UCIF.

Trustees: Brian Hancock FRCS, Glyn Constantine FRCOG, Mhairi Collie MD FRCS Brenda Grey, Ishbel Campbell and Sarah Fraser.

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