

Healing Hands of Joy

Annual Report

2020



"The virus has really affected my Ambassador work. There are no gatherings at the health centers, so I am teaching from house to house. I am telling the pregnant women to go for prenatal care and take care of themselves. All the while, I am searching for fistula cases. So far I have found ten women with suspected fistulas."

-Safe Motherhood Ambassador Azalech Tsige

Picture front cover / story pg. 5

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Graduates of the 66th class of Safe Motherhood Ambassadors Hawassa Center

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.

Dear Friends,

2020 was a year like no other as together our world faced a crisis of epic proportions. In the midst of uncertainty and fear, the Healing Hands of Joy community came together across the US, UK, Australia and Ethiopia. Your prayers and steadfast support brought relief to Health Centers, health workers, and women living alone and isolated from the consequences of obstetric fistula.

The Covid-19 pandemic brought many uncertainties and challenges to our work, including the temporary closure of our centers, but it also brought fresh opportunities. With our centers closed, our work shifted out of our centers and into the field. We doubled our awareness activities and held more community engagement events than we ever anticipated. We increased individualized visits for women not fully cured, including the provision of emergency food and sanitary relief, and supplied replenished toolkits to hard-working Ambassadors. To combat rising home delivery rates, we provided health centers with essential personal protective equipment (PPE) to make it safe for pregnant women to access care. We have so many rich stories of impact to share with you in the pages to come.

I (Allison) was so grateful to have traveled to Ethiopia just before Covid shut down the borders. We were shocked and saddened by news of the Tigray conflict in November and we are extremely grateful for your prayers and support for our staff during the seven long weeks with no communication. The region is still unstable and has been devastated by the turmoil and unrest, with less than 10% of rural Health Centers operational. We are working with the Regional Health Bureau and our network of Safe Motherhood Ambassadors to assess and determine how HHOJ will continue to support women, children and safe deliveries.

I (Meselech) am most excited this year to be opening a new rehabilitation center in the country's largest region, Oromia. Oromia's Jimma University Hospital is eager for Healing Hands of Joy to join them in their efforts to eradicate fistula in that region. Healing Hands will offer fistula survivors emotional and occupational rehabilitation to help them reintegrate back into productive and full lives. Healing Hands will also create awareness in the Oromia communities about preventing Fistula and encouraging safe childbirth delivery options. We met the women at the Jimma University Hospital treatment center and it was hard to see these women go without the rehabilitation support that HHOJ provides in the other regions. We know there is a better way to bring them hope and the fullness of life.

Because Healing Hands of Joy has been a leader in helping eradicate obstetric fistula in Ethiopia over the past ten years, The Ethiopia Ministry of Health has reached out to us to co-lead with them, the development of a new National Strategy to End Obstetric Fistula in Ethiopia. The new five year plan will curate the road map needed for the next stage of our journey to JOY. The government's positive recognition of our work in Ethiopia energizes and excites us to reach our final goal: the total eradication of Obstetric Fistula in Ethiopia.

It's the support of you, our partners, that made this year a triumph in maternal health initiatives. Thanks to you, Healing Hands of Joy has emerged from 2020 strong, hopeful, and determined to see the end of obstetric fistula in Ethiopia.

With gratitude,



Allison Shigo
Allison Shigo
CEO, Co-Founder



Meselech
Meselech Seyoum
Country Director



2010 - 2020

Ten Years of Making Motherhood Safer Together



2010

Allison Shigo & Brett O'Donnell sign an agreement with the Tigray Regional Health Bureau and **Healing Hands of Joy is born.**



2013

On the first annual **International Day to End Obstetric Fistula**, Beriha Reda (the first Safe Motherhood Ambassador trained!) speaks at the United Nations in NY.



2015

HHoJ launches training center in Bahir Dar and Hawassa, where we celebrate our **first graduation classes in the Amhara region and SNNPR.**



2018

Our staff from the Tigray, Amhara, and Southern regions together at a retreat in 2018. **In ten years, our staff has grown from 1 to 40!**



2019

Safe Motherhood Ambassador Kufu is invited to speak at an International Women's Day event at the US Embassy in Addis Ababa with Ambassador Michael Raynor.



THE JOURNEY TO JOY

WITH AMBASSADOR AZALECH TSIGE

When a woman tries to deliver her baby at home, complications often prolong her labor. Prolonged labor is the leading risk factor for developing **obstetric fistula**.



This was the story for Azalech, whose picture is on this report's front cover. Azalech had seven children before her final pregnancy ended in prolonged labor and a case of obstetric fistula.

Although her husband stayed with her (many men leave their wives when they develop fistula), Azalech was alone in her suffering for six long years as she grappled with the pains of incontinence and social isolation.

At the end of those years, Azalech was fully cured of her fistula with reparative surgery. But her journey did not end there.

After their treatment, Healing Hands of Joy invites fistula survivors to join our Safe Motherhood Ambassador training program.

Safe Motherhood Ambassador training is a holistic rehabilitation program to help fistula survivors rediscover their joy and self-esteem by training them as educators so that they can reclaim their sense of purpose.

Azalech graduated from the Safe Motherhood Ambassador program in January 2020, less than three months before Covid-19 would erupt into the global spotlight.

Right: Ambassador Azalech holds the sign on the day of her graduation from the HHoJ Hawassa center.



We visited Ambassador Azalech as part of our emergency Covid-19 relief efforts only a few months after her graduation. While delivering food and sanitary supplies amid the pandemic, we found Azalech still dedicated to preserving women's lives in her community.

Unable to speak at public gatherings, **Azalech began walking door-to-door with maternal health education**, dispelling misinformation about the virus and encouraging women to go to health centers for prenatal care.

In a few short months, Azalech had **identified 10 women living with suspected fistula cases in her community** and educated dozens more about the importance of maternal healthcare.



Azalech is one of 168 Safe Motherhood Ambassadors that we supplied with emergency assistance between March and December of 2020. We're inspired by the way she and the other Ambassadors continued to serve their communities through their crises.

The virus has really affected my Ambassador work. There are no gatherings at the health centers, so I am teaching from house to house. I am telling the pregnant women to go for prenatal care and take care of themselves. All the while, I am searching for fistula cases. So far I have found ten women with suspected fistulas.

OUR COVID RESPONSE

Out of our centers & into the community

EMERGENCY SUPPORT | PROVIDING EMERGENCY FOOD & SANITARY RELIEF FROM SHORTAGES

"My husband died very soon after I developed fistula. The stigma was very hard from my community, and I was always crying. I had three surgeries, but I wasn't cured.

[HHoJ's visit] has surprised me because you have brought sanitary pads that are very exciting, more exciting than anything... I am grateful to have you.

You are the only close family I have, thinking of me day and night. I have no words to thank you. I always pray for you and that God will repay your work. Now I have everything. I can go anywhere, even church."

–Ambassador Zewdie Gelaw, Amhara



HEALTH CENTER SUPPORT | MAKING WOMEN SAFER AS THEY SEEK MATERNAL CARE



"Currently our health center has shortages of Personal Protective Equipment because we didn't have enough budget allocated for the purpose [before Covid-19]. This PPE support fills a big gap in our services. Your support of the maternal child health department reduces the supply problems of other departments as well. Health workers feel safe and confident. They feel free to work, and it reduces the amount of cases we have to refer out. **It's been eight years since the maternal child health department workers got new gowns.** We are really very grateful for what you have done. It is a tremendous support for us at this very critical time."

–Health Center Head Bancha, SNNPR

Healing Hands of Joy's health center partners saw an 82% increase in usage of antenatal care, a 113% increase in facility-based delivery, and a 96% increase in usage of postnatal care.

PREGNANT WOMEN'S CONFERENCES | COMBATting MISINFORMATION

"It's motivating and joy to attend these conferences."

"Inviting my husband to attend the conference helps us discuss things openly and agree on health center delivery."

"We love coming here and count the days until the next conference."



2020 IN THE NUMBERS



149 SAFE MOTHERHOOD AMBASSADORS TRAINED



136 MALE FAMILY MEMBERS EDUCATED



248 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT EVENTS
WITH AN ESTIMATED **299,600** PARTICIPANTS



46 STAKEHOLDER & HEALTH WORKER WORKSHOPS
WITH AN ESTIMATED **1,700** PARTICIPANTS



71 NEW CASES OF OBSTETRIC FISTULA IDENTIFIED



Pictured: Ambassadors

Your support provides Safe Motherhood Ambassadors with all the tools they need to reclaim their lives after fistula – including economic support and business training to help them gain financial stability.

In 2020, the Healing Hands of Joy center in Hawassa began a pilot in-kind support program to explore what would happen if we provided Ambassadors with outright ownership of economic assets, like livestock, instead of a micro-loan. **The results are remarkable.**

Ambassador Tewabech (pictured center above with her cow and sheep) graduated from our Hawassa center in February 2020, after four years of living with fistula. She wasn't fully cured, and was working to support her two children alone. By June of 2020, Covid-19 had taken such an economic toll that she sent her children to live with different relatives and moved in with her nephew. Tewabech received emergency food and sanitary support as part of our Covid-19 relief, but we knew she needed more than temporary aid.

It cost 7,500 Birr (about \$185) to purchase everything Tewabech would need to start her own business -- one cow and one sheep.*

Tewabech seized the opportunity with both hands. Now she has two sheep, and her cow is pregnant. In addition to supporting herself she has also begun saving money. Now that she doesn't have to worry about putting food on the table, she's free to focus on her work as a Safe Motherhood Ambassador and is an active educator in her community. Most importantly, her children have been able to come back home.

Tewabech's story is just one of the many successes of the in-kind pilot project in Hawassa. On average, **each Ambassador in the program increased her net worth by 130% in less than a year**, and was able to begin saving money instead of paying back a loan.

*Not including the administrative costs to facilitate the program, including staff pay, which range from \$60-\$65 per Ambassador participant



s with their livestock

Key
to a better
future

Economic Support Program Average Return

\$162 → **\$239**

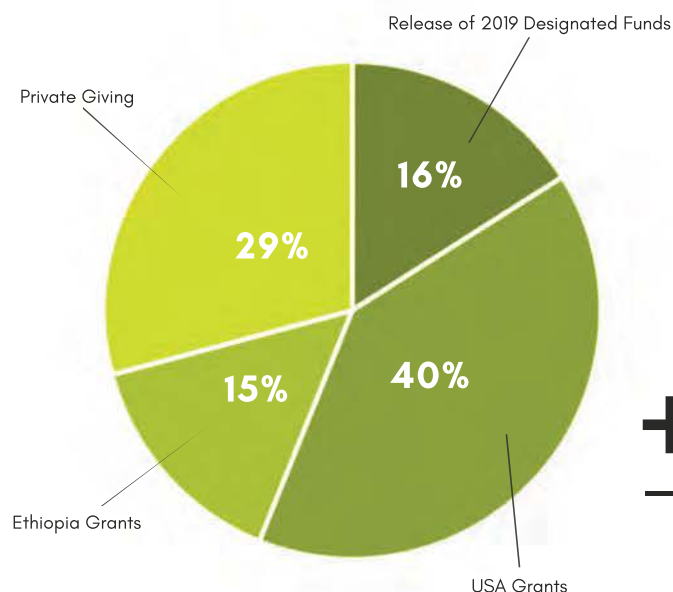
Our average investment for each Safe Motherhood Ambassador, which bought them a cow, ox, or the equivalent in goats.

The average profit each Ambassador made with the sale of animal goods and services.

147%

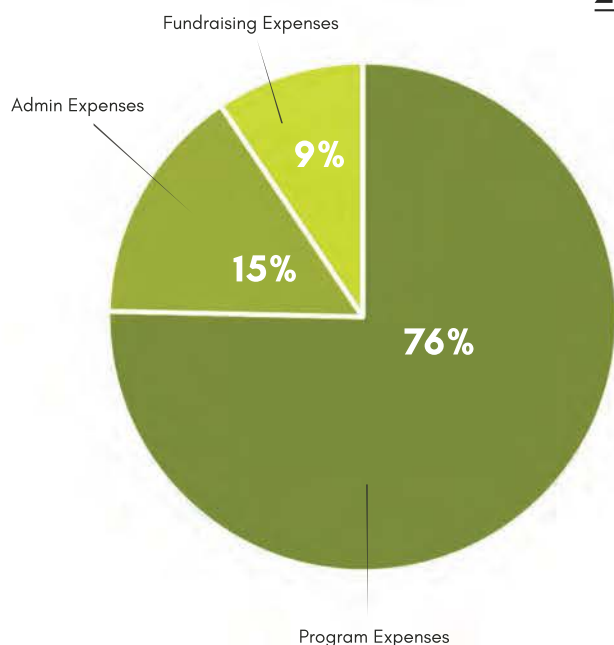
Average return on investment for each Safe Motherhood Ambassador in the in-kind pilot program!

2020 FINANCE REPORT



2020 INCOME

| | |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------|
| \$200,000 | -Release of 2019 Designated Funds |
| \$501,062 | -USA Grants |
| \$184,231 | -Ethiopia Grants |
| \$364,415 | -Private Giving |
| + | |
| \$1,249,708 | -Total Income |



2020 EXPENSES

| | |
|------------------|-----------------------|
| \$708,417 | -Program Expenses |
| \$143,073 | -Admin Expenses |
| \$88,686 | -Fundraising Expenses |
| + | |
| \$940,176 | -Total Expenses |

Because of the temporary programs suspension caused by Covid-19, we came in under-budget in our projected 2020 operating expenses. Surplus funding has been carried over to fund 2021 program expenses.

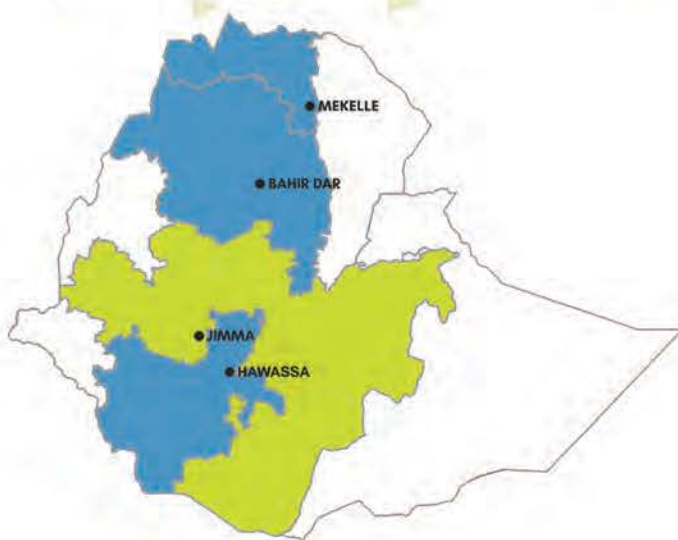
2021: THE YEAR AHEAD

Thanks to you, we're coming out of 2020 stronger than ever.

Strategic Plan Update

Despite the pandemic's interference in program operations, we are on track to complete our 3-year Strategic Plan this year.

As part of this plan, we are expanding our operations into the Oromia region of Ethiopia in summer 2021. We will open a Safe Motherhood Ambassador training center in the city of Jimma, collaborating with the University Hospital there to begin rehabilitation and training of fistula patients.



5-Year Plan to Eliminate Obstetric Fistula

The Ethiopian Ministry of Health has developed a 5-year nationwide plan to eliminate obstetric fistula in the country. Healing Hands of Joy will play an integral part in this strategy as one of the partner stakeholders in this initiative.

We are in the process of developing our own organizational 5-year strategy in alignment with the national strategy in Ethiopia to evaluate our capacity and potential for growth in the coming years.

Be Part of the Vision!
**Support us to see a
fistula-free Ethiopia by
2025!**



Thank You
For Ten Years
Of Joy

Healing Hands of Joy

Board of Directors

Cindy Breilh – Board Chair

Terri Hart – Board Vice Chair

Kimberly Williams – Secretary

Susan Goode – Treasurer

Nigest Haile

Keith Hendrix

Amy Olson

Leah Pedersen Thomas

Susan Rankin

Allison Shigo

Dan Ward



Welcome to Nigest Haile

Welcome to our newest board member, Nigest Haile, who has joined us in 2020.

Nigest is an activist in the promotion of women entrepreneurs, with particular focus to women exporters. She has 23 years experience working in the Ethiopian Ministry of Trade and Industry in different capacities.

We're honored to have Nigest's vast experience and expertise alongside us.



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*Pictured: Safe Motherhood Ambassador
Manayesh from the Amhara region*

