



Action  
on Fistula



## **ASTELLAS ANNOUNCES GROUNDBREAKING €1.5m PROGRAMME TO TACKLE OBSTETRIC FISTULA IN KENYA**

*Funding will help treat 1,200 women with life changing surgery and support major outreach project*

**Chertsey, England [23rd May, 2014]** Astellas Pharma Europe Ltd. (APEL), the European Headquarters of Tokyo-based Astellas Pharma Inc., today announces a groundbreaking programme, Action on Fistula, an initiative led by the charity Fistula Foundation, which is funded by APEL. This three year initiative (between 2014-2017) will aim to transform the lives of more than 1,200 women in Kenya living with obstetric fistula.

Funding of €1.5 million will provide support to increase the number of fistula surgeons trained utilising the International Federation of Gynaecology and Obstetrics (FIGO) Competency Based Training Programme in Kenya by 100% and significantly boost the number of surgeries that take place. A Fistula Treatment Network across Kenya will also be created and a major outreach programme funded with community workers identifying and encouraging patients to access available treatment. This initiative aims also to recognise the complex life situation faced by women suffering from fistula and supporting those living in isolated rural communities to have access to this important treatment.

An obstetric fistula is a hole between the vagina and rectum or bladder that is caused by prolonged obstructed labour when emergency care is unavailable, causing either fecal or urinary incontinence or both conditions. Whilst virtually eradicated in developed countries, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) estimates 3,000 new cases of obstetric fistula occur annually in Kenya, with approximately one to two fistulas for every 1,000 deliveries.<sup>1</sup>

Obstetric fistula sufferers are too often subject to severe social stigma due to odour which is constant and humiliating, often driving the patients' family, friends and neighbours away. Stigmatised, these women are also often denied access to education and employment and left to live lives of isolation and poverty. Untreated, fistula can lead to chronic medical problems including ulcerations, kidney disease, and nerve damage in the legs.



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Ken Jones, President & CEO of Astellas Pharma Europe Ltd., comments, “Action on Fistula tackles a significant unmet need for treatment in urology, where we have a strong heritage. Obstetric fistula has been virtually eliminated in higher income countries yet is estimated to still affect around one million women worldwide<sup>2</sup>, mainly in sub-saharan Africa.

“Through our flagship corporate giving programme with the Fistula Foundation we want to help treat more women living with this devastating condition. Critically, the programme will build capacity through surgical training so that even more women can be treated in the future.”

Kate Grant, CEO, Fistula Foundation, comments:

“There is an enormous need for fistula treatment in Kenya and we can’t face this challenge alone. We’re honoured to be working with Astellas to help end the suffering of women across the country.

The Action on Fistula programme will help provide the vital treatment these women need and deserve to live happy, fulfilled lives. This generous support will also help us train more surgeons to deliver high quality treatment, enabling many more women to be treated in the future.”

The UNFPA is spearheading the global Campaign to End Fistula. Commenting on the announcement, Dr. Laura Laski, Chief, Sexual and Reproductive Health Branch, from the UNFPA said:

“The partnership announced today by Fistula Foundation and Astellas Pharma Europe is the first of its kind in Kenya and has the potential to be a roadmap for the way corporations, NGOs and citizens can join together to identify and treat the severe backlog of women who are suffering from obstetric fistula.”

In addition to funding this programme, Astellas is actively encouraging and enabling employees to fundraise to support fistula treatment and welcomes other interested parties to contact the Fistula Foundation. For every €350 raised, an additional woman can receive life changing surgery.

For more information about the programme visit [www.astellas.eu/action-on-fistula](http://www.astellas.eu/action-on-fistula)  
<http://www.astellasendingfistula.co.uk/>



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## **References**

1. United Nations Population Fund, Direct Relief and Fistula Foundation Global treatment Map at <http://www.globalfistulamap.org/>
2. Fistula Foundation, Fast Facts and FAQ at <http://www.fistulafoundation.org/what-is-fistula/fast-facts-faq/>

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## **Notes to Editors**

A key objective of Astellas' VISION 2015 is to become global category leader in several therapeutic areas where high unmet medical needs exist. Through its high degree of expertise and by combining outstanding R&D and marketing capabilities, Astellas is making strong progress towards achieving this.

### **About Astellas Pharma Europe Ltd.**

Astellas Pharma Europe Ltd., located in the UK, is the European Headquarters of Tokyo-based Astellas Pharma Inc. Astellas is a pharmaceutical company dedicated to improving the health of people around the world through the provision of innovative and reliable pharmaceuticals. As a global company, Astellas is committed to combining outstanding research and development (R&D) and marketing capabilities to continue to grow in the world pharmaceutical market. Astellas Pharma Europe Ltd. manages 21 affiliate offices located across Europe, the Middle East and Africa. In addition, the Company has an R&D site and three manufacturing plants in Europe. The company employs approximately 4,350



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staff across these regions. For more information about Astellas Pharma Europe, please visit

<http://www.astellas.eu>

#### **About Fistula Foundation**

Fistula Foundation is dedicated to treating obstetric fistula, because we believe that no woman should suffer a life of isolation and misery simply for trying to bring a child into the world. We fund local partners at 38 sites in 19 countries – funding more fistula repair surgeries worldwide than any other nonprofit not receiving government funding. Based in San Jose, California, in the heart of Silicon Valley, Fistula Foundation is honored to have received eight consecutive 4-Star ratings from Charity Navigator; only 1 percent of charities have received this designation.

#### **About FIGO**

The International Federation of Gynaecology and Obstetrics (FIGO) aims to promote the wellbeing of women and to raise the standards of practice in obstetrics and gynaecology. It has member associations in 125 countries/territories.