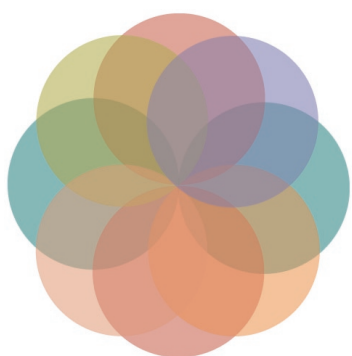


fistula STORIES

EXPLORING FAITH AND ACTION
TO END FISTULA IN THIS
GENERATION



the story
of faith SESSION II

Session Goals

To explore the connections between faith and action as well as between ourselves and women dealing with fistula.

Opening Prayer

God, you, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful
Our guide to knowledge and health,
Exposing us to natural gifts of the Earth,
Let us learn from your wisdom, and take heed your advice
And share in our experiences with our sisters across the faiths of this world.
Ameen.

LEADER'S NOTES

Before Part I begins, you may want to review briefly the content of Session I. Ask the group to define what obstetric fistula is and what causes it. Check to see if all group members have had a chance to visit www.fistulastories.org.

Take turns reading this selection from the Quran. After reading, you may want to give a little time for quiet journaling about the questions on the next page before discussing as a group.

RESOURCES FOR THIS SECTION:

Madani, Ashiq Elahi. (2006) *A gift for Muslim women*. New Delhi: Idara Isha'at-E-Diniyat (P) Ltd. pp. 832-833.

Sabiq, Sayyid. (1991). *Fiqh-us-Sunnah*. Chicago: American Trust Publications. p. 72.

Part I: The story of Maryam

Holy Quran, 19, 16:26

¹⁶And mention in the Book (the Qur'an, O Muhammad (pbuh), the story of) Maryam (Mary), when she withdrew in seclusion from her family to a place facing east.

¹⁷She placed a screen (to screen herself) from them; then We sent to her Our Ruh [angel Jibrael (Gabriel)], and he appeared before her in the form of a man in all respects.

¹⁸She said: "Verily! I seek refuge with the Most Beneficent (Allah) from you, if you do fear Allah."

¹⁹(The angel) said: "I am only a Messenger from your Lord, (to announce) to you the gift of a righteous son."

²⁰She said: "How can I have a son, when no man has touched me, nor am I unchaste?"

²¹He said: "So (it will be), your Lord said: That is easy for Me (Allah): And (We wish) to appoint him as a sign to mankind and a mercy from Us (Allah), and it is a matter (already) decreed, (by Allah)."

²²So she conceived him, and she withdrew with him to a far place (i.e. Bethlehem valley about 4-6 miles from Jerusalem).

²³And the pains of childbirth drove her to the trunk of a date-palm. She said: "Would that I had died before this, and had been forgotten and out of sight!"

²⁴Then [the babe 'Iesa (Jesus) or Jibrael (Gabriel)] cried unto her from below her, saying: "Grieve not! Your Lord has provided a water stream under you;

²⁵"And shake the trunk of date-palm towards you, it will let fall fresh ripe-dates upon you."

²⁶"So eat and drink and be glad.."

Part 2: Our Stories

- [1] The story of Maryam follows her through the process of pregnancy and labor, both of which clearly cause Maryam pain. To what benefit does the recognition of discomfort aid Muslim women? What does this say about Islam's identification of women's health issues?

- [2] The passage suggests use of dates during pregnancy. It has been suggested that consuming dates reduces post pregnancy bleeding and strengthen uterus muscles. Is there still opportunity to look to traditional medicine to address the issue of hemorrhage and fistula, or should this issue be addressed by modern medicine?

- [3] How can the Muslim community improve on engaging in Muslim women's health issues, particularly for women with greater difficulty in accessing information? Are there opportunities for scientific and religious collaboration? If so, how?

LEADER'S NOTES

Decide together what you will do to journey with the stories you have heard today until the group next meets. You may commit to telling one person each about fistula, reviewing the blog at www.fistulastories.org and writing your own short reflection to be posted, posting about obstetric fistula to your blog or facebook, or praying for the women whose stories you have heard as well as those whose stories remain untold.

Part 3: Journeying with the stories

Before our next meeting we/I will:

Closing Prayer

God, you, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful,

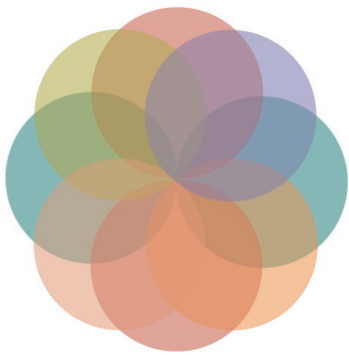
The giver of life, the remover of difficulties,

Today we have learned about many stories concerning women and their struggle with hemorrhage from our sisters of other faiths,

We thank you for this knowledge, and ask for your guidance to use it for the betterment of women who suffer from this ailment

We ask that you give our women and men the voice, the strength, and the faith to seek out change and opportunity for these women.

Ameen.



**the story
of action** SESSION III

Session Goals

To more closely examine our role in working to end fistula in this generation.

Opening Prayer

God, you, the protector,

We know that you have not forgotten these women,

Let us too not forget

Make us wise to the solutions of these problems

Continue to give us the strength to pursue these causes with unfettered hope and faith

Thank you for paving the path for Sarah and Julie to make progress and a difference in the lives of women with fistula

May we continue to make strides with your love and compassion.

Ameen

Part 2: Stories of Action — Sarah's Story

Sarah Omega Kidangasi



Turn back to page 8 and remember Sarah Omega Kidangasi's story. She ended by asking of other fistula sufferers, "how will they know there is still hope?" They will know in part because of the work Sarah has been doing as an ambassador to governments and the United Nations—raising awareness, concern, and money to bring an end to fistula in this generation.

In 2008, Sarah came to Washington DC to advocate on behalf of the millions of women who die each year in childbirth or suffer from related injuries, speaking with US government representatives and dignitaries and encouraging their support of a resolution to reduce maternal mortality in the US and abroad. At a press conference on Capitol Hill she said, "Living with obstetric fistula is a life full of stigma...It is a condition that has left many homes broken. It denies you the freedom to intermingle with others. You live a lonely life, and you are rejected. The worst thing about obstetric fistula is that you become a social outcast." The day after Sarah's visit, the resolution guaranteeing US commitment to reducing maternal mortality that had been introduced by Congresswoman Lois Capps was passed by the US House of Representatives, supported by every Democratic woman member of Congress.¹

And then in 2009, Sarah traveled to Geneva, Switzerland, to address the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, whose yearly focus was Global Public Health. The council met especially to discuss the health-related Millennium Development Goals (MDG), including MDG 5, which aims to improve maternal health and reduce maternal death—the goal where the least has been achieved to date. The 400 attending ministers of health, ministers of foreign affairs, and ambassadors at the ECOSOC High-Level meeting listened to Sarah tell her story and were confronted with the grim facts that every minute a woman dies needlessly in pregnancy or childbirth, and for every woman who dies, 20-30 women suffer a serious birth injury, of which one of the more devastating is obstetric fistula. Since this meeting, maternal health has been on the radar screen of the United Nations in several ways, including the creation of an Adolescent Girl Taskforce and movements to more fully integrate gender and gender justice work at all levels of the United Nations.²

- [1] Who holds the power in Sarah's story?
- [2] How does Sarah assert power for herself?
- [3] How can Sarah serve as role models for us? For other women in her situation?

LEADER'S NOTES

Look back to Session 1 and remember reading and hearing Sarah Omega Kidangasi's story. Her story did not end there. As we continue to hear her story, take turns reading out loud and listen with openness and respect. As you read and listen, ask the group to note what feelings and questions are coming up for them.

¹ UNFPA, "Fistula Advocates Visit Capitol Hill: Maternal Mortality Resolution Passes House," 22 May 2008 <http://www.americansforunfpa.org/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?pid=729>

² Leyla Alyanak and Katia Iversen for UNFPA, "Advocates Rally World Support to End Fistula; Safe motherhood on the forefront of important UN meeting," 06 July 2009.

LEADER'S NOTES

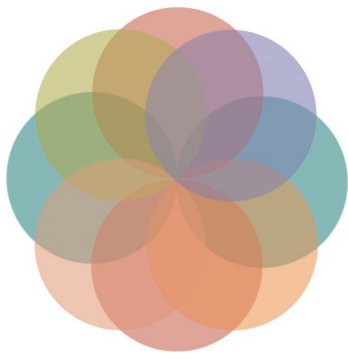
In the next session, the group will decide together what action we will take as we continue to journey with all of the stories we have heard. The group should commit to visiting www.fistulastories.org/action and reviewing the ideas for action there to discuss in the next session.

Part 3: Journeying with the stories

Before our next meeting, we will brainstorm action ideas, beginning with visiting www.fistulastories.org/action. In addition, I/we will:

Closing Prayer

God, you, the one who treats with kindness,
Today we have been learnt more of Sarah's story,
And how you have blessed her with both strength and determination
We ask that you continue to give women like Sarah a voice and undying
determination
And we ask that the people listen, when women like Sarah speak
And that these words spur both action and justice to end this undeserved
fate
Ameen.



tell a new story: faith in action

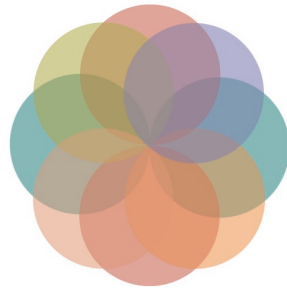
PRAYERS FOR SESSION IV

Opening Prayer

God, you, the caretaker, the giver of all things
We learnt of the stories of Jarius, the woman with a hemorrhage,
Mary, Rebekah and Hannah.
We see that this is a problem not of one faith, or one race
May our lines of difference dissolve, and our efforts transcend color
or religious belief to work for all womankind.
May we realize a call to action, and an avenue for success, with your guidance.
Ameen.

Closing Prayer

God, you, most wise, most omniscient
We have read, we have heard, we have discussed.
We have learnt, we have shared, and we have questioned.
We thank you for this opportunity to come together and
understand the forces and causes of this duress.
We ask that you grant these women safety from misfortune.
We place our lives in your hands, and accept our responsibility
to bring an end to this plight.
Ameen.



fistula STORIES

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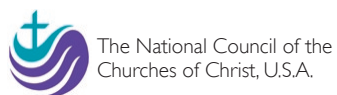
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DESIGN

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