In cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Zonta International has supported the Liberia Fistula Project since 2008, and has remained a key partner. From prevention to treatment and rehabilitation of fistula survivors, the project has remained engaged with the community and policymakers in restoring the health and dignity of women and girls suffering from fistula.

Sarah Shamue is among the women and girls whose dignity and health have been restored through the Liberia Fistula Project. Sarah lived in a remote village in central Liberia, and became a fistula survivor at the age of 17 as the result of a pregnancy that ended with complications.

Below is Sarah’s testimony:

“It was my first pregnancy. My mother, who is a Traditional Birth Attendant (TBA), decided to help me deliver my baby at home. She sent for another TBA in the village to come and assist her. For two days, I could not deliver. In the process, my mother and her friend forced me to deliver by several ways. At one point, my mother’s friend asked me to confess (insinuating that the baby was delayed in coming out because I had had many sexual partners during the pregnancy). I grew so tired of their torture until I had to lie and say I was in a sexual relationship with her husband. That was when they decided to give up on me and referred me to the nearby clinic.

Before arriving at the nearby health center, the baby was already halfway out. I was at the health center for another day and a half with no end to my suffering. I was transferred to Phebe Hospital in Suacoco, where I received a cesarean section to deliver my baby. At that point the baby was already dead.

I spent about two weeks at the hospital. I noticed that I was wetting the bed.

Following my discharge, I returned to the village with paralyzed lower limbs. After eight months in the village, I learned that the condition I was suffering from is called fistula and help was available.

I was successfully treated by the Liberia Fistula Program, which also provided me with the opportunity to turn my life around. I took that opportunity to learn soap-making, cosmetology, hair plaiting and embroidery.

I am now free from fistula and empowered to earn my own money.”