

Washington University in St. Louis

Washington University Open Scholarship

Spring 2017

Washington University
Senior Honors Thesis Abstracts

Spring 2017

Centering Women's Voices: Global Aid and Local Realities of Obstetric Fistula in Uganda

Shivani Desai

Washington University in St. Louis

Follow this and additional works at: https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/wushta_spr2017

Recommended Citation

Desai, Shivani, "Centering Women's Voices: Global Aid and Local Realities of Obstetric Fistula in Uganda" (2017). *Spring 2017*. 25.

https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/wushta_spr2017/25

This Abstract for College of Arts & Sciences is brought to you for free and open access by the Washington University

Senior Honors Thesis Abstracts at Washington University Open Scholarship. It has been accepted for inclusion in Spring 2017 by an authorized administrator of Washington University Open Scholarship. For more information, please contact digital@wumail.wustl.edu.

CENTERING WOMEN'S VOICES:
GLOBAL AID AND LOCAL REALITIES OF
OBSTETRIC FISTULA IN UGANDA

Shivani Desai

Mentor: Shanti Parikh

Within the Western-dominated international health care system, the experiences of women in the Global South are often overlooked, ignored, dismissed, and deprioritized. Medical issues such as obstetric fistula—ones that can be prevented, yet continue to afflict millions of women worldwide—exemplify this cruel reality of structural inequity. Over four months of ethnographic fieldwork in Geneva, Switzerland and Iganga, Uganda, I explore the disparity in understandings of fistula between levels of power and proximity, moving from local realities in Iganga to international perspectives in Geneva. From community care to international policy work, I investigate how these differences in perception affect the aid and care offered to Ugandan women and how the voices of former fistula patients are often left out of decision-making processes. Throughout the paper, I comparatively analyze perspectives, weaving through incongruent narratives of traditional and clinical care, stigma, unsustainable aid structures, and women's needs. At its core, this project seeks to contribute to scholarship on global health and development work by uplifting and giving space to voices that are too often marginalized within international work. Through centering women's voices, policymakers can come to understand authentic needs and how best to strengthen humanitarian health aid.