



BENIN

PHASE III



Country Situation at Baseline

- **Profile of fistula survivors:** A 2002 assessment of four health facilities found the majority of women seeking fistula treatment to be between 18 and 30 years old, though they tended to be even younger in Tanguiéta. Most women were poor, came from rural areas, and had been abandoned by their husbands.
- **Caseload:** Site visits to four facilities noted a total of three full-time physicians performing fistula repair surgery. Physicians who have trained at Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital volunteer in Benin throughout the year. Between 2000-2003, there were 237 cases of obstetric fistula reported in 30 hospitals, though it is likely that cases are underreported. Forty-one percent of these cases were in Atacora (Tanguiéta), and 30.8% were in Borgou (Bembèrèkè). Hospitals in Benin receive many fistula repair patients from Niger, Nigeria, Togo, and Burkina Faso.
- **Barriers:** Hospitals are in need of funding and basic supplies and equipment. There are few health care providers trained in fistula treatment. The tradition of delivering at home also poses a challenge in the elimination of fistula.
- **Cultural Context:** Among communities and health care providers, there is little awareness of the causes of fistula and little emphasis placed on treatment; some providers in Benin have dismissed fistula repair as “luxury” surgery. Many women with fistula seek care from traditional healers, who may be unaware that fistula is a treatable condition.

| SELECTED INDICATORS | |
|--------------------------------------------------|------|
| Total population (millions) | 6.9 |
| Total fertility rate | 5.66 |
| MMR (per 100,000 live births) | 850 |
| % births with skilled birth attendant | 66 |
| births among women 15-19 (per 1,000 live births) | 107 |
| IMR (per 1,000 live births) | 93 |

Source: UNFPA State of World Population, 2004

Source: Findings from Nine African Countries, EngenderHealth and UNFPA, 2003

Facilities Available to Treat Fistula

1. Centre National Hospitalier et Universitaire (National Hospital and University Centre), Cotonou
 - Eight beds in the maternity ward; one operating theatre
 - Three urologists (two perform fistula repair) and at least four nurses
2. Brothers of St. Jean of God Hospital, Hôpital de Zone de Tanguiéta (Zone Hospital of Tanguiéta)
 - 250 beds, 40 of which are in the maternity ward; two operating theatres and follow-up rooms
 - One full-time physician performs surgery; two general practitioners perform C-sections
3. Hôpital Evangélique de Bembèrèké, (Evangelical Hospital of Bembèrèké)
 - 60 beds; three operating theatres
 - One expatriate OB/GYN volunteers three to four months per year; one person with a nursing



certificate; seven hospital workers who have been trained informally

Campaign Achievements

Policy

- Benin is currently implementing its four-year National Strategy for the Eradication of Fistula.

Research

- A 2002 rapid needs assessment, part of the *Findings from Nine African Countries*, surveyed health care facilities, fistula survivors, and health care providers. An in-depth qualitative study of the socio-cultural dimensions of fistula will be finished during the year 2005.
- A feasibility study has been initiated by the Regional Institute of Public Health, with support from the Ministry of Health and WHO, to assess capacity for a Pilot Regional Centre for fistula treatment.

Advocacy & Community Mobilisation

- 40 health workers and radio announcers from nineteen community radio stations were trained in disseminating messages about fistula and the importance of skilled attendance at childbirth.
- In July 2004, UNFPA Benin organised a televised roundtable on obstetric fistula for World Population Day. Representatives from the national university hospital, the Ministry of Health and UNFPA provided information on fistula prevention and treatment and the Campaign to End Fistula. An audio recording of the programme is being translated into national languages for broadcast on community radio stations.

Prevention

- Six health zones implementing the National Reproductive Health Programme are supported by UNFPA to improve emergency obstetric care: Bembèrèkè, Natitingou, Aplahoué, Pobè, Tanguiéta and Malanville.
- The Clinical Guidelines for Emergency Obstetric and Neonatal Care, are being implemented in 6 hospitals, 14 municipal health centres, and 70 district health centres.

Treatment

- A hospital in Bembèrèkè is now able to provide fistula treatment services. In addition, surgeons from the National Hospital and University Centre and the University Gynaecological and Obstetrics Clinic plan missions to Bembèrèkè and Tanguiéta to perform fistula repairs.
- Modules in fistula repair techniques, including the repair of complicated cases, will be incorporated into the curriculum at two medical schools, Cotonou and Parakou.
- Benin has developed a community-level referral system between major health centres and facilities repairing fistula. The health centres have recently obtained vehicles to use as ambulances and for transporting medical personnel to follow up on treated women.

Partnerships

- 1) Ministry of Health
- 2) Directorate of Family Health (DSF)
- 3) Supervisory Boards of the Medical Zones of Tanguiéta and Bembèrèkè
- 4) Faculty of Sciences and Health (FSS)
- 5) Regional Institute of Public Health (IRSP)
- 6) Department of Urology of the Hospital National Centre
- 7) University Clinic of Gynaecology and Obstetrics (CUGO) of the Hospital National Centre
- 8) Academy of Cotonou
- 9) Geneva Foundation for Medical Education and Research (GFMER)
- 10) World Health Organization (WHO)