



# MAURITANIA



## PHASE II

### Country Situation at Baseline

- Profile of typical survivors:** The average age of fistula survivors interviewed for a 2003 needs assessment was 27 years, and their average ages at marriage and first childbirth were 12.8 and 18.3 years respectively. Eighty percent of the women had developed fistula during their first childbirth. Many were in labor for two or three days, and very few (0.53%) had had Caesarean sections or access to emergency obstetric care.
- Caseloads:** In the 1990s, a French gynaecologist performed a few fistula repair surgeries; additional surgeries were later performed by national gynaecologists and urologists. Since the success rate was relatively low, many fistula survivors have since sought care in neighbouring countries, including Senegal, Mali and Morocco. Currently, there are four urologists and 15 gynaecologists in the country (ten of whom practice in the capital, Nouakchott). None of these providers have received specialised training in fistula repair. As a result, the wait for treatment is long, and few surgeries are performed.
- Barriers:** There is little knowledge of fistula among policy makers, community members, and health care providers. Three out of four health professionals do not know that fistula can be prevented and treated, and few attempts at fistula repair surgery have been made. Women must travel long distances to reach health care facilities, and may not be able to afford the cost of treatment.
- Cultural context:** Often, women in labour must be transported by freight vehicles, cart, or camel to the nearest health care facility. Women often have little decision-making power, which limits and delays their access to health care.

SELECTED INDICATORS	
Total population (millions)	3.0
Total fertility rate (2000-2005)	5.79
MMR (per 100,000 live births)	1,000
% births with skilled birth attendant	57
births among women 15-19 (per 1,000 live births)	104
IMR (per 1,000 live births)	97

*Source : UNFPA, State of World Population, 2004*

Source: Étude d'analyse de la situation des fistule obstétricales en Mauritanie, UNFPA and Ministry of Health of Mauritania, 2004

### Facilities Available to Treat Fistula

- Mauritania does not have any centres specializing in fistula repair, but there are two hospitals in Nouakchott, Hospital Cheikh Zayed (CHZ) and Centre Hospitalier National (CHN), where providers occasionally attempt fistula repair surgeries. There are ten regional hospitals and 53 health centres in the districts.

## **Campaign Achievements**

### ***Policy***

- Mauritania is currently in the planning phase of its national fistula campaign. The UNFPA country office is working with the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs (MSAS), the Mauritanian Association for Gynaecologists and Obstetricians (ASMAGO), and other partners to prepare a National Strategy for the Elimination of Obstetric Fistula.

### ***Research***

- In 2003, an in-depth needs assessment was conducted to investigate health care providers' perceptions of fistula, national capacity for service delivery, and the socio-cultural dimensions of fistula. The report was completed in June 2004.

## **Partners**

1. Ministry of Health and Social Affairs (MSAS)
2. Mauritanian Association of Gynaecologists and Obstetricians (ASMAGO)