

Holistic Prevention, Treatment, Reintegration, and Governance Program for Women With Fistula in Kissidougou, Guinea

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Obstetric Fistula Background

Causes:

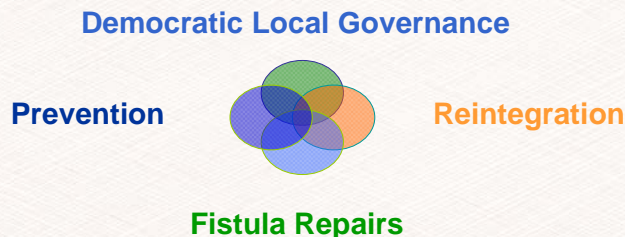
- Unavailability of quality health services, e.g. access to cesarean deliveries
- Burden of transportation
- Early childbearing and gender inequality
- Poor governance

Consequences:

- Still birth
- Chronic incontinence
- Abandonment or neglect



Components of the Guinea Fistula Care Program



Democratic Local Governance

Framework of good governance and democracy used to address root causes of fistula and engage local government in community social and health issues by:

- Fostering transparency and citizen participation in use of public resources.
- Promoting community involvement and mobilization around maternal health/fistula.

Fistula Repair Services

- Project strengthens the capacity of supported sites to provide comprehensive fistula care by training surgical teams, and providing equipment and supervision/follow-up.
- As of December 2009, a total of 607 repairs have been conducted (since September 2005).



Fistula Prevention

- Local government spearheaded creation of the Village Safe Motherhood Committees Approach to increase community involvement in fistula prevention.
- Volunteers sensitize communities about maternal health, fistula treatment and prevention and create links between the community and health facilities.
- Since the start of the project:
 - 20 committees have been formed.
 - 77 volunteers have been recruited.



Reintegration of Women Post Fistula Surgery

The Social Immersion Approach

After discharge, women who have undergone profound emotion distress live on a voluntary basis with local host families for 2-3 weeks.

- Women receive social support and information on postoperative care, causes of fistula and prevention and interpersonal communication skills.
- Fosters community agents of change: 37 of the 96 hosted women have conducted awareness raising sessions in their communities.



Lessons Learned

The holistic approach:

- Is a transformative process that goes *beyond physical treatment* to address emotional and psychosocial issues.
- Improves confidence and rebuilds self esteem, creating *agents of change*.
- Improves links between fistula repair facilities and the surrounding community.
- Creates an *enabling environment* for a comprehensive fistula program and is instrumental to the improvement of maternal health outcomes.
- Creates strategic alliances with and within the community, creating opportunities for *program sustainability*.