



FIGO supports the International Day to End Obstetric Fistula (23 May 2016)

Statement from the International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO) on the International Day to End Obstetric Fistula (23 May 2016)

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FIGO is the only global organisation representing gynecologists and obstetricians, with Member Societies in 130 countries/territories. Its vision is for women of the world to achieve the highest possible standards of physical, mental, reproductive and sexual health and wellbeing throughout their lives. It is committed to working for the benefit of all women, especially those who suffer from highly distressing - yet largely treatable - conditions such as fistula.

Obstetric fistula - a hole between the vagina and rectum or bladder that is caused by prolonged obstructed labour - most commonly occurs among the poorest, most disadvantaged women who live in low-resource countries, and who give birth without access to medical help. The prolonged labour leading to the condition also results - in nearly all cases - in the death of the baby and leaves the woman suffering from chronic incontinence and a range of other debilitating and distressing health problems. Traumatic fistula can be caused as a result of sexual violence. Fistula inevitably has severe psychosocial and socioeconomic consequences that are brought on by social segregation, which in many cases results in loss of livelihood, isolation and feelings of shame and despair.

Through its ongoing Fistula Surgery Training Initiative, FIGO is actively involved in building the capacities of fistula surgeons in accredited training centres, using the 'FIGO Global Competency-Based Fistula Surgery Training Manual'. Training Fellows are chosen from countries with a high prevalence of fistula, and the Initiative is dedicated to helping them acquire the knowledge and skills needed to prevent obstetric fistula, and provide high quality surgical, medical and psychosocial care to women who have incurred fistula, whether during childbirth or because of inflicted trauma.

To date, over 50 Fellows from fistula-affected countries across the world are now involved in the FIGO training programme and have participated in placements in FIGO Accredited Training Centres in Ethiopia, Tanzania, Nigeria, Kenya and Uganda. There is now an urgent need to scale up the supply of fistula repair instruments and equipment to the Fellows to ensure they have access to specialised materials in order to provide high quality fistula repair work in their home facilities.

Through its ground-breaking Fistula Initiative, collaborative efforts with FIGO Member Societies and work with other fistula-related organisations, FIGO is contributing positively to the new global Sustainable Development Goal no 3 - 'Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages'.

Sources/resources:

1. <http://figo.org/fistula-training-initiative>
2. FIGO's latest Fistula Training Initiative Newsletter:
<http://us9.campaign-archive1.com/?u=d460713a06b122a1269dff801&id=0e6e6e703f&e=32db5d451a>
3. <http://figo.org/committee-fistula>
4. <http://www.endfistula.org/public>
5. http://www.who.int/features/factfiles/obstetric_fistula/en
6. <http://www.fistulafoundation.org>