

Gender

38 Women benefit from free obstetric fistula surgery

Gender Desk Report

THIRTY-EIGHT women underwent free surgery to repair their obstetric fistula between November and December last year.

Thirty of the women were repaired at the Mercy Women's

Catholic Hospital at Mankessim in the Central Region and eight were repaired in the Upper West Region.

The women were beneficiaries of the Partnership to End Fistula in Ghana (PEFIG), a group that is committed to mobilising the resources needed to reduce the prevalence of obstetric fistula among women and girls in Ghana.

The partners are Access Bank Ghana, Fidelity Bank, AT, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) World Food Programme (WFP), Office of the First Lady, Ghana Health Service (GHS), the Gender Department of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection and the Media and Communications Advocacy Network (MCAN).

The partnership was formed to drive a seven-year campaign to end obstetric fistula in Ghana by accelerating repairs and reintegration of fistula cases.

The focus of PEFIG is especially in the regions with the highest prevalence of obstetric fistula, comprising the North East, Upper East, Upper West, Central and Savannah regions.

Giving an update on obstetric fistula activities in Ghana at a meeting held by the partners in Accra, Vivian Ofori-Dankwah of

the Ghana Health Service (GHS) said the 38 women were identified through a social mobilisation effort, using volunteers from the Community Health Planning and Services (CHPS) compounds.

She said in the northern sector, the mobilisation was carried out in Yendi, Nanumba, Wa and Kpandai.

Coordinated effort

The UNFPA Country Representative in Ghana, Dr Wilfred Ochan, noted that the partners bring a comparative advantage to deliver towards the fistula work in Ghana.

He noted that whether the partners worked individually or collectively, it was important to coordinate the mobilisation of resources to enable the PEFIG to achieve its target of 200 obstetric fistula repairs per year.

"Though the target is to

repair 200 obstetric fistulas per year, "If we can do more, the better", Dr Ochan stated.

He stressed the need for the renovation and provision of equipment to some of the health facilities that provided obstetric fistula services.

Dr Ochan further urged the partners to contribute to the rehabilitation of the women who were repaired and advocated to remove the stigma which made women and girls suffering from obstetric fistula feel neglected.

Passion

A Maternal Health Thematic Fund Consultant of UNFPA, Dr Divine Attupra, said the PEFIG was a loose arrangement of interested organisations with the passion to address the problem of fistula in the country.

"It is not legally binding on any partner but only for mobilising resources and other support for fistula programming, with the UNFPA acting as the secretariat for the partnership," he said.

Dr Attupra said advocacy efforts were ongoing to nurture the partnership to grow and to attract more organisations to join.



• Dr Divine Attupra addressing participants in the partners meeting