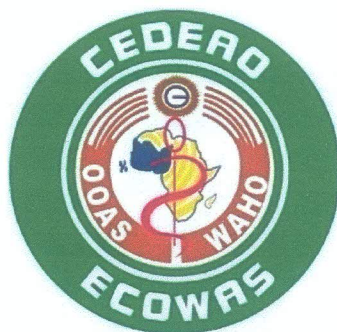


**WEST AFRICAN HEALTH ORGANISATION
ORGANISATION OUEST AFRICAINE DE LA SANTE
ORGANIZAÇÃO OESTE AFRICANA DA SAÚDE**



**19th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of
Health Ministers of ECOWAS**

4 – 8 June 2018, Banjul – The Gambia

**RESOLUTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF OBSTETRIC FISTULA FROM THE
ECOWAS REGION**

Considering: Protocol A/P2/87 establishing the West African Health Organisation (WAHO),

Considering that:

- WAHO's goal of significantly improving the health of the people of the ECOWAS region;
- The United Nations Secretary General's 2003 call to end fistula in West Africa "within a generation", the region needs optimized fistula prevention incorporating safe surgical procedures in the implementation of the Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn and Child Health, a community engagement for effective and confidential identification of patients, respect of the rights of women, young people, teenagers, as well as partnerships, coordination and mobilization of the consequent resources;
- ECOWAS countries have the heaviest burden of maternal morbidity and mortality in the world; and that obstetric fistula is a key indicator of the enormous inequity in the health and well-being of women and girls. Countries in the ECOWAS region need a clear roadmap with specific steps to eliminate fistula by 2030;
- The highest level of political commitment demonstrated by the ECOWAS Heads of States and Government, ECOWAS First Ladies at the Regional Meeting on Obstetric Fistula For A Fistula Free West and Central Africa held in Niamey in March 2018; development partners, academic institutions and professional organisations for the continuous improvement of the quality of life of women in West Africa;

Conscious of:

- Effective government leadership and investment and the concerted efforts of many stakeholders and health professionals in the region can significantly catalyze better health outcomes for women;

Recognizing that:

Adolescent girls are particularly vulnerable to maternal morbidity and mortality, including obstetric fistula, and concerned that the leading cause of death among girls aged 15 to 19 in many low- and middle-income countries is pregnancy and childbirth; and women aged 30 and older are at increased risk of developing complications and dying during childbirth;

Lack of access to sexual and reproductive health, including emergency obstetric services, remains one of the leading causes of obstetric fistula;

Access for all to quality care, including emergency obstetric care, as well as access to qualified staff and safe surgery, are needed to significantly reduce maternal and neonatal morbidity and mortality;

The links between poverty, malnutrition, lack of adequate health services, early pregnancy, early and forced marriages, violence against young women and girls, and gender inequality as root causes of obstetric fistula;

Early pregnancies increase the risk of complications before and during delivery, with a much higher risk of maternal mortality and morbidity;

Limited access, particularly timely access to quality emergency obstetric care, causes high rates of obstetric fistula and other maternal morbidities as well as maternal mortality;

Approves this Resolution on the Elimination of Obstetric Fistula in the ECOWAS Member States by 2030 and,

Urges Member States to:

- Demonstrate strong and continuous political commitment;
- Make national investments and resource mobilisation for collective action to eradicate fistula in West Africa;
- Involve civil society organisations, professional bodies, development partners and other stakeholders more in maintaining and strengthening national integrated health systems and capacities, in partnership with academic institutions for prevention, identification of cases, surgical and non-surgical management, reintegration and rehabilitation of women with fistula in the region. Promoting quality data for decision-making as well as operational research is essential to the success of the fistula elimination agenda;
- Ensure the right to good quality education for women and girls, to redouble efforts to improve the education of girls and women at all levels, including secondary and higher education;
- Establish and strictly enforce laws to raise the legal minimum age of marriage;

Invites the Technical and Financial Partners

- To intensify their efforts and investments to support countries in the development of national and regional plans and strategies to end fistula in West Africa by 2030;

Encourage the Director General of WAHO to:

- Provide support to Member States in their efforts to elimination of obstetric fistula and to improve the health of women;
- Mobilise technical and financial partners to support member states in their efforts to improve Reproductive Health and in the implementation of national policies and strategies for Reproductive Health/Family Planning.



Prof Moustafa MIJIYAWA
Minister of Health of the Republic of Togo
Chairperson of the 19th Ordinary Assembly of ECOWAS Health Ministers

Banjul, 8 June 2018