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## **Northern communities lead the way for a fistula free northern Ghana**

In the wake of International Day to End Obstetric Fistula, Net Organisation for Youth Empowerment and Development (NOYED-Ghana) are doing their bit to take on the challenging to bring an end to this debilitating birth condition by launching Campaign for Fistula Free Northern Ghana.

“Obstetric Fistula is a preventable and treatable condition directly linked to one of the major causes of maternal mortality, obstructed labour, and it’s time that we stood together as a country and ended this pain,” said Executive Director of NOYED- Ghana AlhassanAbdulaiIddi.

The condition often occurs in a young woman the first time she has a child and due to a number of factors including physical and reproductive underdevelopment, limited medical access obstructed labour often occurs with the woman remaining excruciating pain for days before her baby is finally freed.

Her baby likely dies and she is often left with an obstetric fistula, an abnormal hole that renders her incontinent.

“In Ghana, we have a situation where women have left fistulas untreated for over 10 years because they are unaware of their options,” said MrIddi.

“Giving birth should not mean that our women have to suffer unnecessarily at all, let alone for years on end, when obstetric fistula is both preventable and treatable.

“With up to 100,000 new cases every year worldwide, the time has come for a Fistula Free Northern Ghana.”

The campaign is led by 12 volunteer leaders from Jarigu, Pagazaa, Dufaa and Baghali and is focussed on educating community members on the causes, prevention and treatment of fistula.

“The men and women who have taken on the role as volunteer leaders have received training from the Tamale Fistula Centre and the Ghana Health Service on what fistula is and why it occurs, as well as establishing a birthing plan to prevent prolonged labour and the risk of fistula,” said MrIddi.

“The campaign focuses on pregnant women receiving professional medical treatment, as many communities still believe home birth is a better option and continue to use harmful traditional practices to birth conditions, providing no benefit but instead only increase the risk of infection.”

NOYED-Ghana’s Campaign for Fistula Free Northern Ghana is run with support from Tamale Fistula Centre, the Ghana Health Service and the UNFPA and is funded by the Trull Foundation USA.

“We are currently looking for financial support to keep this campaign going over the next couple of years because as the campaign states, it’s time for a fistula free northern Ghana,” said MrIddi.

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