



**23 May 2015 – Today is the [International Day to End Obstetric Fistula](#) . This year's theme is 'End fistula. Restore women's dignity' and underpins the [United Nations Population Fund](#)'s (UNFPA) efforts to prevent this injury.**

[Obstetric fistula](#) is one of the most serious and tragic injuries that can occur during childbirth. It is a hole between the birth canal and the bladder or rectum caused by prolonged, obstructed labour without treatment.

The condition typically leaves women incontinent, and as a result their communities often shun them. Sufferers often endure depression, social isolation and deepening poverty. Many women live with the condition for years – or even decades – because they cannot afford to obtain treatment.

In a statement for the day, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, says: “the fact that fistula persists primarily among the poorest and most marginalized women and girls in the world is an egregious outcome of social, economic and gender inequalities, the denial of human rights and inadequate access to quality reproductive health services, including maternal and newborn care.”

## **Campaign to End Fistula**

Mr Ban continues, "To address the neglected health and human rights issues of fistula, UNFPA and its partners launched the global [Campaign to End Fistula](#) ."

"In the twelve years since this effort began, much has been accomplished, including providing relief to more than 57,000 women and girls through fistula surgical repairs."

However, the Secretary-General emphasizes that "much more needs to be done."

This statement is reiterated by Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin, UN Under-Secretary-General and UNFPA Executive Director. He states that at least 2 million women still live with the condition and 50,000 to 100,000 new cases occur every year.

"With the right combination of political will and leadership, financial commitment and scaling up of evidence-based, cost-effective, quality interventions, ending forced marriage and ensuring girls education as well as voluntary family planning, we can end the needless suffering of millions of women and girls."

## **Let us all work together to wipe fistula off the map!**

In the dusk of the Millenium Development Goals and dawn of the post-2015 agenda, restoring women's dignity is a crucial and well-timed goal.

"We have a golden opportunity to put the rights and dignity of women and girls – including the invisible, disenfranchised, and voiceless – at the heart of a people-centred, equity-driven, rights-based agenda. Only then can we transform the vision of ending preventable maternal and newborn death and injuries into reality, and truly bring about the world we want," Dr. Osotimehin

asserts.

In doing so, “let us all work together to wipe fistula off the map”.

### **More information**

Help us stimulate awareness on fistula by using the hashtag [#FistulaDay](#) on social media!

To learn more about obstetric fistula, discover [the dedicated World Health Organization \(WHO\) pages](#) on the topic.

Find out more about UNFPA – the lead UN agency for delivering a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every birth is safe, and every young person's potential is fulfilled – and their work by consulting their [website](#) , [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#) .