

## **Mass screening campaigns to increase awareness of cervical cancer treatment and prevention in Equatorial Guinea**

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Cervical cancer is the fourth most frequent cancer in women and represents 7.9% of all female cancers. In 2015 it was estimated that approximately 90% of all deaths due to cervical cancer occurred in low and middle-income countries. The risk of cervical cancer can be reduced with current vaccines that protect against cancer-causing types of the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV), which in conjunction with early diagnosis, effective screening, and treatment may further reduce mortality and increase prevention. Screening aims to detect and treat cancers at early stages. Cervical cancer awareness, access to screening and early diagnosis are very limited in Equatorial Guinea, therefore posing a barrier to effective prevention. In October 2016 Medical Care Development International (MCDI), funded by Noble Energy Inc, launched a Cervical Cancer Screening and Treatment (CCST) project. As part of this project Cervical Cancer Screening Corners (CCSCs) were established in two regional hospitals in the cities of Malabo and Bata as well as mass screening campaigns. The screening campaigns, which target women aged 20-26 years of age, aim to detect, treat and refer cases, as defined by lesions in the cervix, for specialized follow-up. Screening methods include visual inspection, Acetic Acid (VIA), and cold coagulation therapy. Other campaign activities include the sensitization of women to attend CCSCs, through Information, Education and Communication (IEC), and capacity development of government officials to implement prevention programs. Since the inception of the CCST project, about 2,500 women have been screened on the continental region of the country against almost 1,500 on Bioko Island. Moreover, for each campaign that is organized, community members receive training on IEC to support sensitization amongst the population of the areas they live in; and over 60 health workers across the country have attended short courses to implement screenings and cold coagulation treatments as part of their training for cervical cancer management.