



Action Group for Promotion and Protection to Flora and Fauna (GAPROFFA)

Groupe d'Action pour la Promotion et la Protection de la Flore et de la Faune (GAPROFFA)

Cotonou, 30th June 2020.

Subject: Support letter from GAPROFFA

on Mercury-free Alternatives to amalgam in dentistry

From the key findings obtained in the prospective study conducted in 2016-2017, on the use of dental amalgam and its mercury-free alternatives in health facilities in Cotonou - Benin, it has been possible to identify the different types of mercury medical devices and products likely to impact professionals' health and the patients visiting dental clinics. Risks related to mercury amalgam uses were mentioned as well as legal provisions and regional declarations calling on Africa to end the use of dental mercury amalgams.

The status of mercury-free alternatives has also been explored in this study in Benin. From this study, patients and doctors are aware that alternatives like composite, Glass Ionomer Cement and others are good for health and the environment. The results revealed that:

1. Accessibility to alternatives in Benin is limited by patients' lack of information and sometimes on "supposed" financial means.
2. Alternatives to amalgams are available in Benin even if few dentists have strong knowledge and practice on how to fill patients' cavities.
3. Composite is one of the best-known alternative materials used in Benin in replacement of dental amalgam. However, the price varies between USD50 To USD120, which is relatively expensive for a common citizen.
4. Composites commonly called resins are widely used in about 90% of dental clinics in Cotonou-Benin. Generally, it is patients with a fairly high education and with very rigorous oral hygiene who are requesting for composites.

From the results, the following recommendations were made in direction of all stakeholders:

- Dentists' (from professional to lecturers) training and patients' awareness raising on alternatives on dental amalgam is a key pillar of mercury free dentistry implementation.;
- Raising awareness among opinion leaders in Cotonou to integrate a strategy of rational and ecological management of amalgams in the Communal Development Plans (PDC);
- Advocacy for a non-introduction and use of mercury amalgams at the national level;
- Advocacy on the subsidy of mercury-free dental amalgams;
- Need for the effective implementation of the Minamata Convention on Mercury.

In a short timeframe, NGO-GAPROFFA will assist government of Benin in developing a communication plan in partnership with media to be broadcasted later this year. In this sense, a partnership contract named "**Good governance of dental amalgams: Save our Life and the one of our Children**" is planned between GAPROFFA and local radios for interactive radio educational programs.

Dr. Adetonah Sounkoura
Executive Director
GAPROFFA-NGO, Benin

