



## STATUS OF WOMEN: EMMAH BANGURA

“We ourselves, the women, also have to advocate for ourselves that we are suffering. We are dying because of lack of knowledge. We are dying because we are poor. We are dying because there is no one to hear our stories,” Isa Cole, Human Rights Activist



Emmah met her second husband, Hassam Kargbo, after the war in Sierra Leone which ended in 2002. She already had three children from her first marriage.

Her first child with Hassam was not yet one year old when Emmah became pregnant again. At first she denied she was pregnant because she was “protecting her husband,” said her aunt, Beatrice Bangura.

The nurses at Kambia Hospital, chastised her for having babies too close together.

Emmah’s previous delivery had been difficult because of the size of the baby – Emmah’s nickname was “Kiniki,” meaning petite.

With this latest pregnancy, Emmah suffered from a protracted labour and the size of the baby did not allow it to descend. With no doctor to perform a caesarean section on time, Emmah and her baby died.

Isatu Turray, Emmah’s other aunt who is a nurse at Kambia Government Hospital, says that Emmah did not want anymore children and that she tried to insert an IUD contraceptive but had to stop due to complications. Because of this, Isatu blames herself for Emmah’s death.

Given their lack of independent financial means, women in Sierra Leone are often unable to decide for themselves to go to a healthcare facility for family planning services, antenatal services, delivery or emergency care. Few women can exercise their right to determine the number, spacing and timing of their pregnancies. They often have little or no choice over whether or when to have sex, and contraceptive use is extremely low. Write to the Minister of Gender and:

- Refer to the case of Emmah Bangura as an example of how women’s low status and lack of independent financial means can lead to ill-timed or unwanted pregnancies, with deadly effects;
- Highlight the importance of strengthening women’s rights in order to assist in the reduction of maternal mortality;
- Encourage him to ensure women are aware of their reproductive rights and have access to family planning.

**Send your letter to:**

Dr Soccoh Kabia  
Minister of Gender  
Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children Affairs  
9<sup>th</sup> Floor, Youvi Building  
Brookfields  
Freetown, Sierra Leone

**Send copies to:**

Amnesty International Sierra Leone  
P.O. Box 1021  
Freetown  
Sierra Leone

Emmah Bangura’s daughter who is also called Emmah