

LIVES CUT SHORT

MATERNAL MORTALITY IN SIERRA LEONE

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH IS A HUMAN RIGHT

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL



HUMAN RIGHTS EMERGENCY

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A SAFE BIRTH IS HER RIGHT

“THE FEAR OF WHAT IT WOULD COST PREVENTED HER FROM SEEKING THE MEDICAL ATTENTION THAT SHE REALLY NEEDED.”

Sarah Kabbia, whose sister, Adama Turay, died several hours after she gave birth to her first child in December 2008.

One in eight Sierra Leonean women die giving birth. Health care facilities are understaffed, lack basic equipment and medicines and are far from people's homes. Pregnant women and their families struggle to afford the costs of getting to a hospital and the costs of the care they would receive there.

Sierra Leone is recovering from 11 years of civil war, which ended in 2002. It will take time and a lot of outside help to rebuild what was anyway an under-resourced health care system. But reducing maternal mortality is not impossible and should start immediately. Responsibility starts with the government: from the very top, the government must show its determination to tackle maternal mortality.

Image: This woman has just given birth to twins and needs blood – none is available, February 2009.
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Dear President Koroma,

I am very distressed to hear of the high risks that women in Sierra Leone face in pregnancy and childbirth. I understand that more women in Sierra Leone die during childbirth than almost anywhere else in the world.

I respectfully urge you to make every effort to guarantee the health and well-being of pregnant women. Access to maternal health care services would be improved by allocating more money to health within the budget, by addressing the mismanagement of resources, by ensuring hospitals are better supplied and medical staff paid adequate salaries and by providing women and girls with information about their health and reproductive rights.

It is your duty as President to ensure that the right to life and the right to health of all Sierra Leonean women are respected and protected. The government of Sierra Leone should ensure that costs are not a barrier to essential health services, including emergency obstetric care and other reproductive health services.

Yours sincerely,

Name: _____

Country: _____

Attach post stamp

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President of Sierra Leone
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Image: Pregnant women in northern Sierra Leone, February 2009 © Amnesty International

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