



TOO HIGH A PRICE: ADAMA TURAY

“Women in general need opportunities to get themselves into a better economic situation so that they can take control over these matters and are not dependent on other for money for their health” Sarah Kabbia, sister of Adama Turay



On 3 December 2008, Adama went into labour. She decided to go to a traditional birth attendant (TBA) even though she had been advised to go to hospital for a caesarean section to give birth due to the large size of the foetus. By 5am on 4 December she gave birth to a girl. Immediately after giving birth she started vomiting and complained of being cold. When she started to bleed, her family began looking for money to take her to the hospital.

Adama’s husband Hassan worked as a casual labourer who earned around Le10,000 per day (US\$3) However six months into Adama’s pregnancy, Hassan became sick and stopped working altogether. Adama did not have steady work either.

This made it impossible for them to save money for an emergency.

Her sister Sarah told Amnesty International, “After several hours of looking for money we managed to get Le200,000 (US\$67) together. At first the taxi was charging Le70,000 (US\$23) but we got him down to Le40,000 (US\$13). We planned to use the rest of the money at the hospital.”

Both Hassan and Sarah accompanied Adama on the 40-minute ride in the taxi to the hospital-she died in the parking lot. It was 8am, just three hours after she delivered. They had to pay the taxi Le40,000 (US\$13) to take the body to the mortuary.

Sarah told Amnesty International, “I think she died because we did not have money and therefore did not go to the hospital on time. We took her to the TBA to deliver because her husband did not have any money to take her to the hospital.”

A large number of maternal deaths in Sierra Leone are linked to high costs for care and the fear of costs which lead to delays in making the decision to seek care, delays in reaching health facilities and the delays in receiving treatment at the health facility. On 23 September 2009, the Government of Sierra Leone announced a free care policy for pregnant women to be implemented in April 2010. Write to the President of Sierra Leone and:

- Refer to the case of Adama Turay as an example of how the costs of vital, life-saving maternal healthcare put it beyond the reach of many women;
- Let the President know that Amnesty International is also planning to ensure that donors are good on their promise to assist the Sierra Leone government in providing free care;
- Encourage the President to:
 - ensure the policy of free care for pregnant women is implemented across all health facilities;
 - encourage the government to allocate 15% of the national budget to the healthcare sector as pledged in the 2001 Abuja Declaration;
 - raise awareness amongst the population about the policy and the need to address delays for pregnant women in accessing healthcare.

Send your letter to:

His Excellency Ernest Bai Koroma
President of the Republic of Sierra Leone
State House, Independence Avenue
Freetown, Sierra Leone

Send copies to:

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

Sarah Kabbia with her two-month old niece Maya at their home in Kroo Bay, Freetown