

Creating more happy 'birth-days' this Christian Aid Week

Every day in Sierra Leone, ten women who had hoped to bring new life into the world die in childbirth.

In rural communities, the poorest women are forced to walk for hours under the baking sun to find a nurse or midwife while others travel on the back of a motorbike to reach medical care far away, in what is the world's most dangerous country to give birth in.

May to December are the 'hunger months' in Sierra Leone and on one meal a day, some mums simply don't have the strength to survive a difficult labour. Others are fortunate enough to have a basic clinic nearby, but these often lack essential equipment, beds and supplies and have no light meaning babies have to be delivered by torchlight at night.

Wherever he went, Jesus was moved by the suffering of people and Christian Aid is inviting churches to stand up for mums this [Christian Aid Week](#) (May 12-18th) against the scandal of life ending when it should be beginning.

The Ebola outbreak of 2014-16 not only killed ten percent of Sierra Leone's healthcare workers but also left it with significant international debt accrued to tackle the disease, leaving even less money for the healthcare so desperately needed to ensure that people can thrive.

Christian Aid is helping communities build their own health clinics and is delivering health training and helping improve hygiene to save lives in a country where one in nine children don't live to see their fifth birthday.

Ministry of Health figures showed in 2013 that 40% of the mums who died were teenagers and Christian Aid's partner RADA is facilitating health clubs in schools to help girls make informed decisions and stay in education.

Senior Programme Officer for Health Projects, Joanna Tom-Kargbo from Christian Aid's Sierra Leone office said: "We work so that communities and women can claim their voice and bring about change in their lives.

"It is inspiring for me to go out to rural communities and see how, as a result of Christian Aid support, villagers are realising what they can achieve and are showing other communities what can be done.

"Together we are not only rebuilding health centres and improving hygiene and medical training, but we are giving hope to communities and all those expectant mums who have lived with such fear.

"I so often think of the feeding of the five thousand, when people put together what they had, those loaves and fishes kept multiplying and people's needs were met. Christian Aid supporters give, act and pray and those ripples stretch right out to remote communities to the most vulnerable people and lives are saved and changed."

Christian Aid regional coordinator for Nottinghamshire, Nick Thorley said: "Christian Aid Week is an amazing celebration of our potential to change the world, through generosity, solidarity and action.

"We stand together so mums and their children can have life in all its fullness. Please join us this Christian Aid Week in any way you can whether it is in prayer, with Big Brekkies, sponsored walks or house-to-house collections or in taking the opportunity to speak truth to power by calling on our Chancellor to work to cancel Sierra Leone's debts that arose from tackling the Ebola crisis.

“Our world needs hope right now. Every mother, every child, all of us are made in God’s image and we passionately believe that when we come together the almighty power of people can make a world in which dignity, equality and justice is experienced by everyone.”

The drop the debt petition can be found here <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/christian-aid-week/campaign-petition-drop-sierra-leone-debt> and supporters will also have the opportunity to fill in a postcard at the back of the Christian Aid Week devotional. Church resources, more information and the opportunity to donate can be found at www.caweek.org . Your gift could buy a stethoscope for £15, a drugs cupboard for £60, a delivery bed for £300 or solar panels for a new clinic for £2,500. You can also donate £5 by texting GIVE to 70040*.

ENDS



Picture 1: Heavily pregnant Jebbeh Konneh is checked by Nurse Judith in the temporary clinic in Sawula village. Jebbeh’s sister died tragically recently in childbirth by the side of the road on the way to get help and Jebbeh is frightened. But Nurse Judith helps give her confidence, Jebbeh says: “The nurse is like our mother because of the caring and concern she has for all of us”.

Picture 2: Nurse Judith checks 12-day old twins in the temporary clinic.

*You will be charged £5 plus your standard network rate. Christian Aid will receive £4.90 of your donation. By texting, you are agreeing for Christian Aid to phone or text you to tell you about our work and how you can help. If you wish to donate and not hear from us again, text GIVE NO to 70040. For more info call 020 7620 4444.