



"For news you can trust!"

The Daily Times
MALAWI'S PREMIER DAILY

Home National News Business News Features Entertainment Comment Sports Feedback Contacts

Features



Making a living out of labour services

BY DEOGRATIAS MMANA

09:12:12 - 25 July 2007

Over 20 expectant women flock to the house of a 40-year-old woman Regina Matolira of Mkomera village in Zomba for delivery every month. The village is within Jali Trading Centre in Zomba.

The women prefer going to Matolira because they say she has the experience in offering labour services. Her home has facilities befitting a "rural labour ward." There is a house with a labour compartment, two rooms where women can sleep and one room for relaxation.

Outside the house are other facilities that include latrines, bathrooms, kitchen and borehole just about 10 metres away. The borehole, which was drilled by The Hunger Project, plays a vital role during labour services apart from the usual domestic uses.

Matolira, a traditional birth attendant, says since she started the job in 2001, she has enabled the births of 2,011 baby girls and 2,021 baby boys as of July 15, 2007. Only 11 babies died in the same period.

"I am pleased to tell you that no pregnant woman has died at my place. As for those babies that died, they were born with complications," discloses Matolira at her house which is adjacent to the labour ward.

She attributes the complications to the fact that many young pregnant girls shun antenatal services.

Her job as a traditional birth attendant begins upon arrival of an expectant mother who is about to deliver. She prepares her clients psychologically for efficient delivery.

She has no problem with those that come without guardians. She provides the care and support needed.

"I take care of them and those who stay here much longer are given food and other necessities," explains Matolira who also reveals that she enjoys her work.

"I do not beat up women who become difficult in the process. I comfort them. That is perhaps why many expectant mothers flock to my place instead of the health centre at Pirititi," she says.

It is her principle that after delivery, every woman has to stay for a day before going back home. She has to check on the health of both the mother and the baby.

However, she refers to the hospital all complicated cases. The problem she experiences is that sometimes an ambulance takes long before it comes. When there is such an emergency, she has to walk to Jali Trading Centre to make a call. This is a distance of about three kilometers. She wishes she had a cell phone so that she could make such calls immediately.

"I am really in problems. My fear is that one day an expectant mother might die at my place. I do not want that to happen here," says Matolira who apparently rejoices for not registering the death of an expectant mother since 2001.

Other cases that she refers to the hospital are young expectant girls and those that show signs of HIV/Aids for proper medication and care.

Matolira also says another problem is that many women refuse to go to the health centre.

"When I tell them to go to the health centre, they simply sneak out of here and stay at their

Website Redesigned and
Hosted by

SKYBAND

home. And they come back when they are about to deliver," she worries.

Surely, every job must have benefits. What is it that Matolira get from such a job apart from serving expectant mothers?

For every delivery, Matolira gets K300. No wonder that she is able to support herself and her child. She does not have a husband. From the fees, she started selling groceries to supplement her income.

She says on average she receives over 20 clients per month. She recalls having received 30 expectant mothers at one time of all those 10 cases were referred to the hospital.

She boasts of constructing the labour ward using her own resources. She at one time got a loan from the Hunger Project amounting to K10,000 which she claims to have already repaid. Indeed, she is such a challenging woman who is also determined and focused.

She found herself in the job after The Hunger Project sent 13 women to Zomba Central Hospital for orientation as birth attendants. Today, 13 villages under Jali epicentre of The Hunger Project have traditional birth attendants.

The villages include Mkomera1 and 2, Namakoka, Jali, Khuvinda, Tokotha, Kupasa, Kabwere, Tchaula, Savula, Ndapata, Lita and Gwedefule.

The availability of 13 traditional birth attendants in Jali area has reduced deaths of pregnant mothers as Matolira observes. She says expectant mothers do not travel long distances to Pirititi Health Centre for labour.

The Hunger Project country director Rowlands Kawotcha says his organisation has always supported the traditional birth attendants. First, he says his organisation provided training to the women and after graduating the organisation gave them equipment for the job.

"It is not ordinary equipment. The equipment is recommended by the World Health Organisation," says Kawotcha.

The country director says his organisation thought of training the traditional birth attendants to reduce deaths of expectant mothers in the area.

"There were frequent deaths of expectant mothers in the area and that affected our projects. Expectant mothers had to travel long distances to a health centre and some died on their way," says the youthful country director.

Although the area has no hospital, expectant mothers find solace in Matolira and her counterparts.