

“What About Our Future Without Our Children?”



In rural Mali, Maimouna Samake has lost two of her three children to the disease malaria.

Her son died last summer when he was only two days old.

“We were so much in love with our children. My husband and I cried a lot over their funerals. If I had to choose between my death and my children’s deaths, I would die and let them survive even though I am only 25 years old,” said Maimouna.

Maimouna, her husband and their surviving child reside in the small village of Tamala located in the region of Ouelessebouyou, Mali, West Africa. 90% of the people in their village contract malaria every year. Despite it being a preventable disease, malaria is the primary cause of death in Mali, particularly among children under five years of age.

Their second daughter, a girl named Assetou, was sick with malaria for three months. Maimouna and her husband could not afford her malaria prescription. The medicine was the equivalent to \$25 USD. After months of suffering, Assetou died when she was eight months old. “She was so beautiful and adorable. I miss her dearly. I look at her picture often,” said Maimouna.

The Samake’s experience is not unique. Mali is one of the least developed countries in the world and most people live below the international poverty line. The situation is especially severe in the rural region of Ouelessebouyou where access to affordable health care and medicine is complicated further by geography, conflict, and extreme poverty.

Maimouna’s family sleeps under insecticide-treated mosquito nets, but she says it is not enough. “We sit outside our huts in the evenings and chat with our friends until 11 pm. This is when the mosquitoes bite.” She believes this is how she contracted malaria during her last pregnancy. The illness resulted in the death of her son within 48 hours of delivery. “My baby boy was so handsome with his beautiful skin,” she said. “My husband and I wanted to have a son to help us plant crops. I am still in shock. I love him so much.”

Mothers like Maimouna are filled with fear and uncertainty about the future of their families. “What would be our future without our children? How can our family be good without having children? Impossible. Our children are our lives. I do not want to bury any more children because of malaria. They are our everything.”

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