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### **Tighten screws on corrupt health workers!**

The government should take strict measures against corrupt health workers while the general public put an end to befriending corrupt health workers if any hopes of reducing the vice are to be entertained.

Recently, the media reported that midwives at Temeke hospital refused to attend to a pregnant woman for refusing to pay Tsh 4,000 'chai money'. While the midwives asserted that the amount was to be used for buying essential equipments for delivery, the patient claimed that she had gone to the hospital with her own delivery kit. A similar scenarios was also reported in Kahama district where Sebonia Faustin (22) whose child is said to have died at the hospital simply because she had refused to pay Tsh 2,000 to the midwives who were on duty for them to attend to her child.

Sikika is concerned that despite the existence of the Prevention and Combating of Corruption Bureau (PCCB), to curb petty corruption, bribery and other forms of corruption continue unabated and no end is in sight for the problem disadvantaging the poor. Repeated cases of corruption in health facilities seem to prove failure of some measures implemented by the government such as transferring or demoting corrupt health workers.

The existence of petty corruption in health facilities is retrogressive as it hinders accessibility of health services by the poor and limits the country's initiatives towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 4 and 5, aimed at reducing child mortality by two-thirds and maternal mortality rate by three-quarters, by 2015.

Sikika is worried by the stance some health workers take of not complying with the government policy on free health services for pregnant women as several cases of pregnant women asked to pay for maternal services while visiting health facilities continue to surge. In trying to verify the situation in Dar es Salaam and Coast Region, Sikika, conducted a research on Petty Corruption which, reveals that 55 percent of patients have been required to pay bribes in at least one health facility.

The government should therefore, put in place deterrent measures in dealing with corrupt health officials as transferring and demoting them will be tantamount to recycling and exacerbating the problem.

Sikika also feels that the public should play a leading role in curbing this social anomaly. In borrowing a leaf from the patient from Temeke hospital who reported the case, the public should take it into their own hands and not only refuse to pay bribes but report the corrupt officials to their superiors.

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