

# Monologues

## Maternal Health



I am excited that it is almost time for my baby to be born. I used to be afraid that the baby might die or that I might die like so many of the women in my country of Afghanistan. Because of the years of war and widespread illiteracy, our people have many misconceptions about what is good and proper health and hygiene care. For example, they believe that birth is dirty and so it should happen in a dirty place resulting in infections, sometimes even causing tetanus and death.

They wrongly believe that the mother's first milk is bad for the baby and so they only feed the newborn sugar water or oil the first few days. This often reduces the production of the mother's milk and results in diarrhea or malnutrition and death for the baby. If the infant is not breathing at birth, they simply accept that nothing can be done because the baby is dead. They think it is God's will.

Because of the Birth Life Saving Skills (BLiSS) program, supported by Global Women, my husband and I have received maternal and infant health education. There are other BLiSS-trained women in my village that will help me when my baby starts to be born. In the villages where there are women trained by BLiSS it has reduced the tragic number of women and babies' who die unnecessarily.

I recently heard about a woman in the Faryab province who had not attended the BLiSS classes. She went into labor and was being helped by a traditional birth attendant. The labor continued too long, so several BLiSS-trained women went to see if they could help. They asked the birth attendant what she had done to help her patient.

Because the birth attendant could not answer the questions to their satisfaction, the women arranged for transportation, prepared a sweet drink for the mother while they were waiting, and then took her to the clinic. The baby came as a breech presentation and the birth was complicated, but the mother and baby survived. The doctor told them that if they had not taken her to the clinic, it is likely that both mother and baby would have died.

I have a friend in a close by village whose daughter had two babies that each died when they were born. There were problems and she didn't have enough milk for them. Last year my friend attended the BLiSS training and when her daughter was due to have another baby she decided to bring her to her house and take care of her herself. So when the baby was born my friend cut the cord with a clean knife, cleared out the baby's mouth and nose, cleaned her off, and took care of her eyes. Then she wrapped the baby and immediately put her to her daughter's breast. She had milk and the baby lived!!! Now my friend is happy and her daughter and her family are happy because they have a healthy baby.

I know that because of BLiSS and the prayers that Global Women asks people to pray for us that I will have a healthy baby. I am thankful for people who care about the women and babies in Afghanistan.