

How Amidu Mattia and his family of 10 fight and defeat COVID-19

Theriyeh Koroma & Alpha Daramy



Photo: Photo: Six of out of 11 members of this beautiful family braved through COVID-19 and survived © Alpha Daramy Sesay/NaCOVERC Risk Communications Pillar

Amidu Mattia, a physically challenged person and his family are alive today because of one brave act he took - he reported early to the healthcare workers when he began feeling COVID-19 related symptoms.

“I could not sleep for most of that night,” The fever made me feel uneasy, recounts Amidu. “I prayed for morning to come so that I will seek medical attention. By daybreak, I wasted no time in telling the healthcare workers about my symptoms,” Amidu emphasized.

Amidu heads the humble but hardworking Mattia family. The family of 11 resides in Mattru Jong, in Bonthe District in the Southern province of Sierra Leone. The

father, Amidu is a physically challenged mechanic who repairs broken electrical appliances while the mother sells cooking condiments.



Photo: Amidu repairs everything home appliance from radio to television © Alpha Daramy Sesay/ NaCOVERC Risk Communications Pillar

Amidu, the head of the family, welcomed the idea of having him and his family members quarantined because they came in close contact with a run-away COVID-19 suspect who had stayed with them for a few days. “The suspect in question is my tenant who returned from a trip from neighbouring Guinea. But we never knew he had the virus,” Amidu stressed.

By the time Amidu knew his tenant had ran away from a quarantined facility, it was too late for him and 10 other members of his family.

The surveillance team in Bonthe was however quick to collect their swab tests which results showed that 6 of the 11 members of the Mattia family were positive of the COVID-19 virus including his wife, two children and two mechanical apprentices.

The family house was cordoned off. No one was allowed to leave or enter except for Mattia and the other five members of his family that were taken to the treatment center.

In the treatment center, Amidu and his family cooperated with the healthcare workers. So it was easy for the nurses, doctors and hygienists to give them the care they needed.

"During Ebola, I learned that most of the people who had the virus were afraid of reporting it either had their health status depreciated or eventually could not survive. So, once we were in the treatment center, we made sure we did what the doctors and nurses told us to do".



Photo: Members of the physically challenged in Matru Jong stood with the Mattia family and welcomed them with open hands after their discharge © Alpha Daramy Sesay/ NaCOVERC Risk Communications Pillar

Amidu's action is commendable. It shows a high degree of patriotism and care for others. He did not want to risk hiding as he had the conviction that he could be endangering his life and that of others.

“Amidu and his family are true heroes. This is what we encourage every Sierra Leonean to do as it is only when report early and comply with our health professional when we stand a better chance to beat the virus,” says Joseph Moi Kamara, the Bonthe District Emergency Response Center Coordinator.

Amidu belongs to a vulnerable community – the physically challenged. His survival from the virus takes a trail in his early reporting and eventually compliance to be admitted into a COVID-19 treatment centre.



Photo: The mother of the Mattia's, son, daughter and father stood in front of the family's house © Alpha Daramy Sesay/ NaCOVERC Risk Communications Pillar

"As a physically challenged person, I was more worried about my chance of survival. It became more difficult for me when confined in the treatment centre away from my livelihood skill and the rest of my family and friends. But I managed to embrace some courage and support through the psychosocial counseling I received while at the centre"

Mattia now has a goal to protect the rest of people like him to have them believe that COVID-19 is real and that they have a chance to survive the virus when they report signs and symptoms early.