

# AFRICAN MOTHERS HEALTH INITIATIVE

2013 Holiday Letter



## PEACE IN MALAWI

This is Peace in the arms of Elizabeth, one of our nurses. Peace was born on September 9th the same day that marked the end of his mother's life. His name was given in memory of his mother Matilda . . . that she might rest in peace . . . that her loved ones might feel peace and comfort as they held her son. His life began with sorrow, at the moment there is joy, and for the future there is hope. Thanks to your support he is a beautiful healthy two-month old.



## Greetings Friends, Family and Cherished Supporters:

Another year is coming to its end and as we sit here now with its many ups and downs behind us, we are reflecting on the blessings and feeling grateful. Thank you for your support over the past year. Thank you for making women and babies half a world away a part of your community by caring for them as your community.

## Taking a Closer Look

In May a group of four nurses from Austin, Texas and a Canadian photographer traveled to Malawi to see our work and volunteer. None of them had been to Africa before. They got their passports, their shots, boarded planes and then joined in the day-to-day experience of going to villages to see our moms and babies. And, after everything was done, what did they think? . . . Three are planning to return in October of 2014. If you are interested in a visit to Malawi, whether or not you have a clinical background, let us know. We would be thrilled to introduce you to those you are supporting.

## 500 Babies and counting

This year nurses enrolled and cared for 112 babies in our Babycare Program, bringing the total of babies cared for, since the founding of our organization, to over 500. Our little clients include those who lose their mothers soon after birth, twins and triplets, low birth weight babies, and disabled babies (this year we enrolled several babies with spinal bifida).

## 40 Mamas in 2013

Miriam developed severe pre-eclampsia in the seventh month of her pregnancy. (Pre-eclampsia is a disease of pregnancy which causes high blood pressure and can lead to organ damage and even death of the mother; the cause is not fully understood and prevention is not possible.) Miriam's doctor decided she needed a c-section in order to save her life. She had her c-section and she lost her baby, but her condition remained critical. Our nurses cared for her at home until she fully recovered.

In 2013, 40 women were enrolled in our program. Some of these women lost their babies, some lost their uteruses (their fertility), some were HIV positive, and many were not. All of them faced difficult recoveries in an environment where life demands much and support is minimal.

Maternal mortality rates in Malawi are decreasing thanks to the work of many and thanks to the passion of President Joyce Banda. Unfortunately at the moment the rate remains unacceptably high and so does the demand for our services.

## Needs for 2014

Our goals are simple . . . healthy moms and healthy toddlers with nice round cheeks and chunky thighs. In order to meet these goals we need: salaries for the dedicated nurses and support staff, fuel for the vehicle, and formula for the orphaned infants and infants with no access to breastmilk. Other items will help improve the quality of our care, our wishlist includes: food supplements for graduates from our programs, cell phones (see below), and a second room next to our office, to keep those who are waiting to see nurses at the office out of the rain in the rainy season.

### Contact Us

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### Donate

Mail a check to 6808 Belford Dr. Takoma Park, MD 20912; or

Donate online at  
[www.africanmothers.org/how-to-help](http://www.africanmothers.org/how-to-help)

PLEASE consider a monthly recurrent donation, possible through online payment options; or

Make a donation in the name of a loved one as a gift this holiday season. Email [admin@africanmothers.org](mailto:admin@africanmothers.org) and they will receive a beautiful card.

### Q: Why does a grandmother in the village need a cell phone?

A: This is best answered with a story from Dehlia Gonzalez, one of the visiting Austin nurses. "One day we headed out to do a few visits with Nitta [one of the nurses] in a remote area. We drove two hours before we reached the first village and when we arrived no one could locate the grandmother with her orphaned granddaughter. We waited for a long while and then Nitta told the family to have the grandmother meet us at the health center which we would pass after a couple more visits. When we finally reached the health center, the grandmother wasn't there. We waited until it started to get dark and then Nitta said it was time to start back. We couldn't leave the formula with anyone except the grandmother, to make sure that it was used correctly and used only for that baby.

As we started to pull out we noticed a puff of dust on the dirt road behind us. The grandmother was running after us with her little granddaughter on her back. The grandmother knew that if she missed us, her granddaughter would not have milk. We quickly helped Nitta to do an assessment in the car and hand over the desperately needed formula to the grateful grandmother."

Guardians need to be able to contact their nurse immediately if there is a problem (e.g. sick mother or baby, or little formula remaining), and nurses need to be able to contact their clients to ensure that they will be present for the visit. Cell phones will ultimately save time, money, and lives. We want to provide a basic cell phone to the family of each person enrolled.

### Looking forward together

Each of the stories of our mothers and babies is a story that begins in hardship or grief but the work of supporting them, caring for them and seeing them through, is truly a work of joy. The people we care for are miracle workers themselves, working with next to nothing but love and passion. For those of us blessed to see it, their gratitude is enough to refuel any waning energy. For those of you who are supporting from afar we want you to know that every donation regardless of the size is meaningful and we appreciate you.

With Warmest Gratitude and Happy Holiday Wishes,

Joanne Chiwaula, the AMHI Board of Directors, the staff and beneficiaries in Malawi.