

African Mothers Health Initiative

Dear Friends,

Another year has come and gone and it seems, as a global community, we continue to wade through an endless fog. As we collectively wait for the light to definitively break through, the platitude, "Life never gives you more than you can handle," comes to mind. This phrase has always frustrated me. Does anyone believe that someone is hungry or sick or bereaved simply because they are more resilient? Are impoverished nations simply made up of the *most* resilient



people? I have heard this phrase spoken as encouragement, but by emphasizing the capacity of the individual it often diminishes their struggle as well as the greater power and responsibility of the collective. Inserting a plural "you" or substituting "us" reveals a more elemental truth. Capacity and resilience are not finite inherited traits but dynamic and responsive fruits of our social nature. Each of us inspires and is inspired. We lean and we support. We rest and allow others to rest. In this way we can overcome incredible odds.

This is what we (donors, partners, board members, beneficiaries) are

doing at AMHI. We find inspiration in the stories of those we serve. We offer support through home-based nursing care, health education, food, and income generating projects. And in the end, together we avert deaths and improve lives. This past year we conducted two focus groups with graduates from our programs. I would like to share the story of one woman who now has a healthy toddler so you might see our work from her perspective.

Program Graduate. *I had a difficult delivery with my fourth born and needed a c-section. After I returned home my stomach began to swell. One day I returned to the doctor and told him that I was experiencing chest pain. He said not to worry, he would prescribe some medication and that I would feel better. But, I knew I was very sick, so I refused. I said, "Doctor, I live very far away. Please help me while I am here. It will be difficult for me to find money to come again." He said ok and ordered an x-ray. He told me they saw something in my uterus and that I should pay K15,000 (\$20) to get my uterus cleaned. I said I did not have that kind of money. If it meant dying, I should just die. He said, "You will not die, we will call for an ambulance to take you to the Regional Hospital." I arrived at the Hospital and was there three days before they took me for surgery. My stomach was so swollen. They did not suture the wound and I did not eat for a whole month. I stayed in the hospital for two months. They would just clean the wound. My baby was also in the hospital on a different ward, he was receiving formula but was malnourished. At one point while I was there, a nurse from Joyful Motherhood [AMHI's sister org] gave me a card and told me to call once I was discharged. Finally, after the two months, I returned to the smaller hospital near my home where they partially sutured the wound and then discharged me. When I returned home to my elderly grandma, I told her, "I am not producing milk, I am eating but there is no milk." We did not know what to do. I said, "If you have K100 (\$0.12) please, let's call the*

Donation Impact Facts

Giving to projects in low-income countries maximizes your impact.

Over 90% of donations to AMHI are spent on program costs in Malawi

According to GiveWell.org the top charities spend \$3,000-\$4,500 to avert a death

AMHI spends <\$1500 to avert a death

one on this card and maybe they can help." My grandma did not have K100. I had no money and my husband had sold all the maize [the staple food in Malawi] we had in the home to cover the costs of our hospitalization. In those days, my baby cried a lot, I had no breast milk and so I was just giving him porridge. He was three months old and very malnourished. One day my neighbor heard the baby crying and came by and asked me what we should do, I told her about the card and she told me to call the number using her phone. I talked to them and they said, "We have heard you. Please do not give water or porridge to the child, your child will live." I wondered if the child would really live, the way he was crying, but they assured me that they would come. They came the next morning. At that time, both my baby and I were sickly and malnourished. People in my area thought we had been discharged home to die. The Joyful Motherhood nurses gave us a thermos, 7 tins of formula, they also gave me a pack of soy flour to use to make porridge. I started eating that porridge the same day. After that, people started saying that I was looking like myself again. Life was returning to me. The next month when they came and weighed the baby, they noted that the weight had improved. I kept giving the baby the milk and the health improved, I also received soy flour and I was better.

Joyful Motherhood has helped me a lot in my household. When they discharged me from their program, they gave me K10,000 (\$12) and said I should start a business. My neighbor kept the money for me initially and I found odd jobs - like washing laundry - to earn a little more. Then I rented a small garden and cultivated it. I harvested ten 50kg bags of maize. There is no hunger in my home now. Joyful Motherhood nurses helped to improve my home, they taught me how to care for my children, they encouraged me, they taught me many things. I thought we would die; there was no food in my home, Joyful Motherhood restored hope in my home. My home is no longer the same. I am thankful to Joyful Motherhood. Please continue this work.

Achievements of 2021. Joyful Motherhood, our implementing sister organization in Malawi, welcomed a new program manager. Glory Mwafulirwa-Kabaghe is doing an incredible job overseeing operations, working to improve our programs, networking with local organizations and seeking grants. Joyful Motherhood nurses provided care to a total of 375 infants and women in 2021. (Approximately two thirds of enrolled infants are orphans.) Babies receive a monthly visit during the first year of life and a visit every other month during their second year. Women receive up to six visits.

The New Entrepreneurs. This year, in collaboration with Recapo Solar, we launched a new income generating program. The Recapo team installed solar lights in the homes of 10 beneficiaries and within the next two months these women will all own phone charging stations. The women are attending training sessions to prepare them to manage their small businesses. Initial benefits include: household savings from not buying candles, ability for children to study in the evenings, income from charging phones for a fee, and increased income from pre-existing business (one woman runs a tea shop out of her home and is able to stay open two hours later).



Goals for 2022. Our goal is to raise \$100K for basic operating expenses and to cover installation of solar light for an additional 60 homes. Our wish list includes money for a new 4x4 vehicle, and beyond that money for an additional nurse to expand services. This year we aim to launch an electronic data collection system, we will continue to develop our monitoring & evaluation systems, and will expand collaborations with local public and private organizations.

Thank you. Your involvement is central to our success. The women caring for vulnerable babies in their homes in Malawi work incredibly hard, the staff in Malawi work incredibly hard, but their efforts would not have the same results without your financial participation and trust in them to effect this change. Many Thanks and Happy Holidays from Joanne Jorissen Chiwaula, the Board of AMHI (Genevieve Grabman, Sabrina Tom, Dehlia Ramos Gonzalez, Marcianna Nosek, Shelly Broussard, and Abiba Matengula) and from the staff and board of Joyful Motherhood in Malawi.

To Donate: Mail us a check or donate at www.africanmothers.org/donate. All donations are tax deductible