



Mothers Around the World

A Portrait of Strength and Resilience



A Mother's Day Message from Zambia

Batuke Walusiku-Mwewa, CMMB Zambia Country Director, reflects on the strength of mothers working on the frontlines during COVID-19.

Being a mother provides great opportunity for learning, growing, and providing growth, a role I have enjoyed for many years to my children. This role extends even in the workplace as I support the Zambia team.

Yet the last year has brought a perspective I never imagined. A global pandemic that hit all corners of the universe. All of us had no choice but to adapt to changes in the way we do things to protect our families, colleagues, and those we serve.

As a mother I got even closer to my family. After all, we were locked down! As if this was not the only thing to do, my family had to support me as I fought COVID-19. Love in the times of COVID-19 is keeping away from those you love so that you keep them safe; family, colleagues, and all.

My children turned and ran away from me to keep a healthy social distance from me. Because this was done for the right reasons, I laughed to myself, happy that all were conscious of the need to keep safe.

We, the mothers, exude love always, yet love, one of the values of CMMB, has had to be redefined. It has been hard to work from home, not be able to see staff and talk about things they are going through as we work, not being able to share a meal, yet still having to meet program targets even as we keep a distance from each other.



I celebrate being a survivor of COVID-19 and not losing any staff to this dreaded disease while saddened by its impact on other families, teams and indeed communities.

I am thankful for the opportunity to celebrate the mothers that are working on the frontline, the community-based supporters of the programs, taking a risk each day, ensuring they do not get or pass on COVID-19 to those they serve. They forge ahead, serving mothers and children, children with disabilities, adolescents and health facility staff.

They are the heroes we celebrate this Mother's Day!

Batuke Walusiku-Mwewa
CMMB Country Director, Zambia





Maternal Health Around the World

Women and children are among the world's most vulnerable populations, disproportionately affected by illness, poverty, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Millions of pregnant women, new mothers, and children experience severe illness or death each year, largely from preventable or treatable causes. The global numbers are staggering and offer a snapshot of maternal health:

- 295,000 women die each year during pregnancy and childbirth
- 5.3 million children under age five die each year from preventable or treatable causes
- 99% of all maternal and child deaths occur in less developed regions, with Africa being the hardest hit
- 28% of maternal deaths are due to diseases that complicate pregnancy, including malaria and HIV
- 35% of newborn deaths are due to complications from premature births

Since 1990, maternal mortality has fallen substantially thanks to increased attention through advocacy and resources. However, there is growing concern for maternal health access, especially now during COVID-19.

Women have been deeply affected by COVID-19.

The pandemic has restricted women's access to maternal healthcare due to lockdowns, disruption of health care services, and fear of visiting health care facilities. Limited resources have been reallocated to COVID-19 efforts with many countries struggling to provide essential health services like maternal care. Early studies suggest global maternal and fetal outcomes have worsened during the pandemic, with an increase in maternal deaths and stillbirths.

Every woman deserves the safest pregnancy and delivery possible—even during a pandemic.

From Haiti and Kenya to Peru, South Sudan, and Zambia, CMMB has continued providing quality and safe health services for mothers during the pandemic. We know that skilled care before, during and after childbirth can save the lives of women and newborns. We believe access to quality healthcare is a basic human right.

2020 Our Numbers



123,270

pregnant women accessed services globally.



73,292

pregnant women supported with first antenatal care visit.



27,791

new mothers received postpartum care.



14,764

pregnant women gave birth at a health facility.



14,729

pregnant women assisted by skilled birth attendants.



13,785

pregnant women supported with fourth antenatal care visit.



Safe Motherhood for South Sudanese Women

According to UNICEF, South Sudan has one of the worst maternal mortality rates in the world. Among the greatest barriers to safe pregnancies and births is a lack of skilled birth attendants.

Sarah Rubino is a nurse midwife and CMMB volunteer who served in Nzara, South Sudan twice, alongside her husband, Martin. As she eagerly awaits the arrival of her second child, Sarah shared this reflection.

As this little baby grows inside of me, I am constantly reminded of all the mothers that I feel I have left behind in Nzara. Although my husband and I had to change our plans slightly for the birth of our second child, COVID-19 largely had left us unaffected. Mothers in Nzara are left in more dangerous situations.

We are struck with the realization that COVID-19 has impacted the community in largely the same way as other deadly diseases. Children are still dying from starvation and complications of malaria. However, COVID-19 placed another burden on the village, not just because of the disease itself, but because of how it has affected nearly every corner of our world. Supplies are much harder to get, and staff have become increasingly overworked.

Now more than ever mothers in South Sudan need our support, yet I feel utterly helpless at times because I am

unable to go and support my fellow midwives through volunteering.

For mothers in Nzara, most aspects of their lives are completely out of their control. Whether it be from war, unstable government, lack of resources, or disease, the people of Nzara face extreme hardships and are confronted with the fragility of life every day.

Despite the many current challenges, CMMB set up remote volunteer education programs to support staff and build capacity in areas where we are still unable to travel. Virtually speaking to college students, we continue connecting with future medical and humanitarian persons willing to advance CMMB's mission.

This last year has been far from what we all expected or envisioned it to be. As we offer up our sufferings and let go of the anxiety of holding onto things that are out of our control, let us all continue to work hard with what we have and be willing to do all that we are able.

Sarah Rubino

Nurse Midwife, CMMB Volunteer Ambassador

A Peruvian Mother Learns from Her Daughter with Special Needs

Over the last 20 years, Peru has made significant progress in improving the health of women and children. However, this progress has largely bypassed remote rural regions and the most vulnerable women and children.

CMMB's Rehabilitation with Hope assists children with physical and cognitive disabilities and their families by providing much-needed access to quality therapy. CMMB sat down with a mother enrolled in the project, Andrea, and her daughter, Leslie.

Leslie is the oldest child of three. She is special, but not because she was born with microcephaly, a rare neurological condition in which an infant's head is significantly smaller than expected. Leslie is special because she's capable of making you see things from a completely different perspective—a perspective not everyone can see.

Andrea is leader and mother in her rural village in Trujillo Province in northwest Peru. She is a community health agent and a part of the entrepreneurship workshop established by CMMB's Rehabilitation with Hope project.

The workshop brings together 28 mothers of children with special needs to create products to sell. The goal of this workshop is to support mothers so that together they can create a small business, and eventually become economically independent. Andrea has a similar dream for Leslie: that she also become independent.

When Leslie first joined Rehabilitation with Hope, she had trouble communicating. Through the physical, language and learning therapy she received from CMMB, Leslie has improved her communication skills, and has been able to become more independent.

All this has allowed Leslie to join her mother in the entrepreneurship workshop and continue developing the physical and cognitive skills she learned in Rehabilitation with Hope. "We integrated her into the entrepreneurship project with me because she learns through imitation, by looking at me," said Andrea. Leslie helps to cut and sew the fabric to create decorative handicrafts that can be sold at market.

"We, as mothers of children with special needs, must not give up," said Andrea. "We must look ahead and see that with effort and perseverance everything can be achieved."

"Our children teach us more than we teach them. I've learned a lot more from my daughter than my daughter from me," concluded Andrea. "They teach us to see things from the other point of view, which sometimes few people see."





Supporting Displaced Mothers in War-torn Syria

After ten years of brutal war, Syria remains one of the largest and most deadly humanitarian crises of our lifetime with an estimated 500,000 people killed and 6.1 million more internally displaced today.

Through our Medical Donations Program, CMMB responds to some of the worst humanitarian crises and natural disasters around the world. In 2020, CMMB distributed more than \$420 million worth of medicines and medical supplies to 52 health partners in 31 countries.

CMMB's partners in Syria are among the largest relief recipients to support the decimated healthcare system. The deliberate bombing of hospitals and killing of doctors has been one of the most brutal aspects of the war. Donated medicines and medical supplies help rebuild the capacity of hospitals and health facilities, allowing health workers to respond more effectively to patient needs and improve overall quality of care.

Women and children living in internally displaced persons camps are the most at risk.

Forced to leave their belongings when fleeing their homes, these families face a persistent lack of basic needs, including access to clean water, food, and shelter. They have very limited or no access to basic healthcare. In response, our health partners in Syria have increased delivery of medical care for women and children in camps.

"We are trying to reach remote camps that do not have access to primary medical care to fill the shortage," said a health worker from Orient for Human Relief, a Syrian health partner of CMMB. "We primarily target children, pregnant and breastfeeding women."

Response teams visit camps to conduct checkups for pregnant women and children, distributing nutritional supplements and transferring urgent cases to Orient for Human Relief's main hospital for treatment.

During ten years of war, Syrian women have shown incredible resiliency in their ability to adapt and recover from the shocks and everyday challenges of armed conflict.

Syrian mothers have sustained their families and communities, fighting to keep their families together and alive. They experienced displacement not once but multiple times, forced to flee from continuous bombings.



"We went to a lot of camps, but no one was willing to receive us," said one woman now settled in a camp established by Orient for Human Relief. "We keep moving from place to place—under shelling, bombardment, and war planes. It's really horrible."

In many cases, Syrian mothers have become the sole breadwinners overnight, after losing husbands and fathers to the conflict. This on top of their roles of caring for children and managing the household by themselves. Without support, the poor living conditions and limited access to healthcare make it increasingly difficult for Syrian families living in displacement to survive.

Celebrating Mothers Around the World

We asked our community to finish the sentence: *My mom is a hero because _____*.

The thoughtful responses made us laugh, cry, and call our own moms! With submissions from all over the world celebrating mothers, grandmothers, aunts, and sisters, we are sharing these words to commemorate mothers.



My Mum, she's the best person. I admire her as an icon and inspiration to which I look up every day. Her hard work has inspired me to work hard and commit to my intellectual development with good morals in the community.

—Samfronce to Roydah

She gave birth to me, and took good care of me, showed me the way to the church, school, health facilities and taught me good manners. She died when I was still in school in 2007. Rest in Internal Peace Mama.

—James to Firimina

She is like a mom to everyone! Throughout my whole childhood, we had lots of different kids live with us either for a short or sometimes a long time. She opened our home, our kitchen, and most, importantly, her HEART to anyone and everyone who needed love. She inspires me every single day to lead with love, kindness, and a little bit of sass.

—Alex to Carrie

My mom is a hero because she never gives up. No matter what the issue is, she pushes forward to keep providing for my sisters and me. I think lots of people know how stressful being a parent can be but she makes it look easy. Of course, there are bumps in life and our relationships but we always drive past it, because deep down we all know we need and love each other. I am and always will be grateful for all my mom has done for me, even if it doesn't look like it. I love my mom and I can't wait until soon, I can be a mother and be just like her.

—Shaienne to Alicia

She is just the nicest and most caring mom ever. She puts others needs before her own. She is a fantastic school teacher and has been praised highly for her work especially her students. She takes really great care of me and offers me advice. She goes above and beyond for everyone, she cares for me when I'm sick or if there's something wrong. She is without a doubt the best mom ever and I'm lucky and happy to have her.

—Anthony to Joanne

I was born in a village setup. It was so hard to go to school in the cold and rainy seasons with no umbrella or shoes. I almost gave up on school but my mom kept telling me that if I got educated, life would be very different. I followed her advice and endured all the way. She sold vegetables and village wine to raise money for my school. I wish she was alive today so I could tell her what a hero she is and that she still remains my hero.

—Abel to Rachael

My mom is a hero because she embodies servant leadership. Her love for her family, friends, local community and the world at large never seems to run out. She has set an incredible example of what it means to be a mother and so many other positive things in this world. I love her and hope to grow to be more like her.

—Teddy to Mary Beth



She has never given up on me.

—Elziabeth to Selin

My mom taught me and my seven siblings self worth. Her love was unconditional. She instilled in us the importance of a good education, respect for our fellow human beings. Also, family is lifeblood. She also emphasized how important it was to respect women and what ever we choose in life professionally to put in 100% effort. Last but not least, put our faith and trust in God almighty.

—Kenneth to Emma

She's been my pillar of strength. My number one cheerleader. Always checking up on me when I'm far from her. When one of us is sick, she's always there taking care of us and pampering us silly. I love her.

—Tracy to Mary

She has been a mother and father, showing us love, giving us big dreams of success, providing parental guidance with love and care and also always being a friend to her children. She is my best friend.

—Kisulo to Mutumba

She absolutely did not stop.

—Edward to Margret

My mother began as a single mother with small children and one income. She worked tirelessly to provide for us and she often had to work to be able to do so. Despite all of this, she was passionate about myself and my sibling's education. She invested in our education and attended every school or extracurricular event.

—Ariel to Tonya

My mom is a hero because she has supported me in every way possible without thinking twice or judging me. During hard times, she fed me more than my stomach could take and she would eat leftovers herself. She taught me not to look down on any one. She believed in me first, that is why I believe in myself.

—Cecilia to Roidah

I am the first child of my mom and she ensured I go to school and never went hungry. I am who I am today because of my mom's effort.

—Franco to Daniella

Porque siempre estuvo allí, aunque no siempre me daba cuenta. Su palabra fue sencilla pero firme, recordándome que el esfuerzo, el estudio y la responsabilidad traen buenos frutos. Junto a ella aprendimos a reír a pesar de las dificultades y a compartir, aun en medio de nuestras carencias. Se esforzó cada día, a pesar de sus enfermedades, para que sus hijos salieran adelante. Y ahora, aunque ya partió a la casa del Señor, su amor, su fuerza y su sabiduría siempre están presentes en mi vida y en la de mi familia.

—Ceci to Esther

She never stopped putting her family first. She was a single parent struggling to make ends meet after she and my dad divorced. He very rarely provided support to her. She worked tirelessly to ensure my brother and I had everything we needed to get through our school days, and she never gave up when life got overwhelming. There will never be another mom and friend like her for me. I miss her every day.

—Katharine to Mary Jo



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