

'Mamatoto' Concept Holds Special Meaning for New Donor



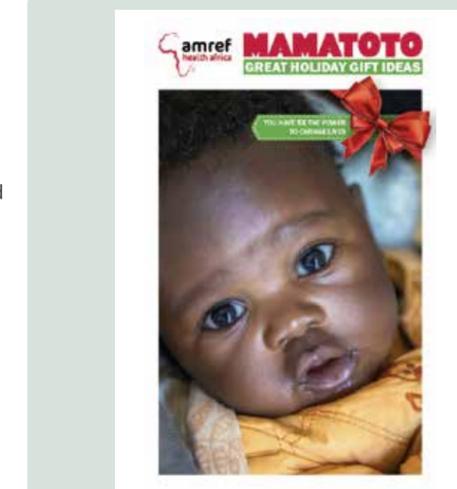
Doris Hamilton

live from Kenya to share her first-hand experience supporting the health and rights of girls and women during the pandemic. "The information provided was stark and powerful," Doris says.

When did Doris first contribute to our work? She says it was towards the end of 2020, when she received an email inviting her to choose a holiday gift for a loved one from our Mamatoto gift catalogue. "Knowing that my gift would be matched 5X made me feel even better about deciding to give."

"Doing good feels good. Pure and simple," Doris says. "Most Canadians are very blessed with resources that make our lives comfortable, purely due to the good fortune of living here. Mothers and fathers in Africa have the same dreams for their children as parents in Canada. If we are in a position to help those dreams come true, let's do it."

To Doris, Amref Health Africa's work can be summed up in two words: community partnerships. "This is the right way to make lasting change happen. Donors know that their donations are being used to help now as well as build for the future."



"As a mother and a grandmother, my family is super important to me," says Doris Hamilton, a consultant who lives in Mississauga, Ontario. "That's why the concept of 'Mamatoto' that Amref Health Africa highlights resonates with me."

Translated to English from Swahili, Mamatoto means "mother and baby" and reflects our focus on ensuring moms and babies in remote communities in Africa have access to the health care they need to survive and thrive.

Doris first learned about Amref Health Africa's work to create lasting health change in Africa while she was employed with Children Believe, a partner in one of our maternal, newborn and child health projects. Then, last fall, two passionate fundraisers came to her door to talk to her about the work we are doing to respond to COVID-19 in Africa. At the time, Doris says, she "wasn't in a position to help." But, she checked out our website and says she "liked what she saw."

She had the chance to learn more when she joined our virtual fundraising event on November 26, 2020, which highlighted the challenges girls and women in African communities are facing because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Margaret Kilonzo, the community health worker featured as our "Amref Health Africa Hero" in this edition of Habari (page 2), joined the event

Did you miss our live virtual event featuring community health worker Margaret Kilonzo? You can watch a recording of it on our YouTube channel at <https://youtu.be/sojYAi4Bc5U>

FUNDRAISING: Inspiring Real Change this Spring

The days are getting longer and the warmer temperatures are in the air. Spring is such a magnificent time of year in Canada, as we start to shed our layers of winter clothing and begin to spend more time outdoors. The season brings a real sense of re-birth and optimism as we hear the sounds of birds, the smell of fresh cut grass and enjoy the long awaited rays of sunshine.

Spring is an inspiring time of renewal and change. It is also a time of hope. The past year has been very difficult for everyone but the communities we work with across Africa have felt the additional challenge of the pandemic on already fragile health care systems. Mothers and their children are in great need of access to essential health services **right now**.

Please help us make this spring truly inspiring and one to remember by supporting vulnerable communities with a gift of health.

Please donate today at www.amrefcanada.org/inspire or by calling us at **1-888-318-4442**



A mother and her baby in Uganda visit a health facility for a checkup.

About Amref Health Africa in Canada

Amref Health Africa, the largest African-led international organization on the continent, reached more than 5.3 million people in 2019 through 178 health-focused projects. Founded in Kenya in 1957 as the *Flying Doctors of East Africa*, Amref Health Africa's strategic pillars focus the organization's work around human resources for health, innovative health services and solutions, and investments in health. Our partnerships with communities in Africa to create lasting health change are at the heart of all we do.

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Cover photo by Steve Kagia

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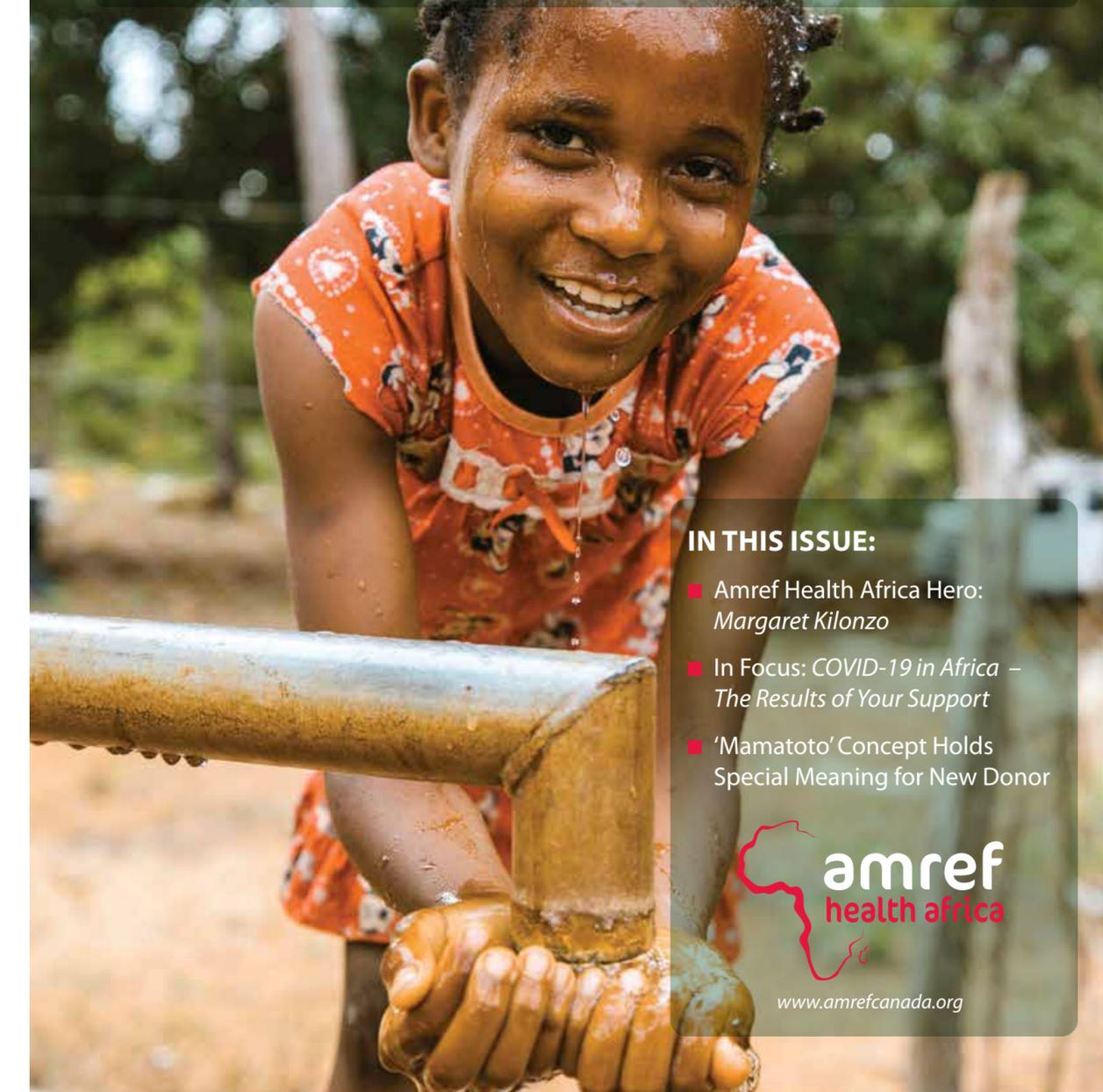
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"Habari" is a greeting in Swahili, a widely used language in eastern Africa. It is also used to mean "What's new?" or "How are you?"

HABARI

news from Amref Health Africa in Canada

Spring 2021



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www.amrefcanada.org

A NOTE FROM ONOME: Thank You

From the moment the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic last March, our supporters have stepped up, generously contributing much-needed funds so we can quickly respond in African countries where we work. Even as we have been facing surging COVID-19 cases and deaths, lockdowns, lost jobs, closed schools, and isolation from loved ones here at home in Canada, you are reaching out beyond our borders to help.

Your support is having an impact. It is providing personal protective equipment (PPE) to frontline health workers, educating communities about how to prevent the spread of COVID-19, providing water, soap and hand sanitizer to communities and ensuring essential health care for moms and babies continues.

This edition of *Habari*, our newsletter for supporters of Amref Health Africa in Canada, is all about how your selfless contribution is helping us respond to the COVID-19 pandemic in Africa.

With deep gratitude,

Onome Ako
Executive Director



AMREF HEALTH AFRICA HERO: Margaret Kilonzo

Margaret Kilonzo is a volunteer community health worker in the area of Kibera in Nairobi, Kenya, one of the largest informal settlements in Africa. She began in 1998, after she received training from Amref Health Africa and the Kenyan Ministry of Health. When COVID-19 reached Kibera a year ago, Margaret didn't hesitate to continue her frontline work despite the many challenges. Here's Margaret's experience in her own words:

"I am seeing many challenges in Kibera due to COVID-19. In households there are more than six people in a single room so social distance becomes very difficult. There is an increase in teenage pregnancies since teens are idle because schools have been closed and many can't access online learning because they don't have smartphones or even electricity. Parents have lost their jobs or daily wages because of COVID-19 so they can't buy enough food for the family, which is leading to girls engaging in commercial sex work to earn money. That is resulting in an increase in HIV infections and unsafe abortions. Myths and



misconceptions about COVID-19 are also a challenge with some community members believing that COVID-19 is not real.

Despite all these challenges, I continuously address issues by making sure people in the households I serve have the information they need to prevent and control COVID-19. I do household visits to check on people's health and refer them to local health facilities for essential care. I meet teenage girls in their household for counselling sessions, including on family planning. I've found that many girls I have counselled are able to stop commercial sex work.

Amref Health Africa has empowered me with knowledge through continuous trainings both in class and online through Leap [a training platform that uses regular cell phones]. I have used this knowledge to empower my community members in so many issues which are health-related, including COVID-19.

I am proud to be a community health worker because if I compare how my community members used to live compared to now, I see a lot of improvement: reduction of mortality rate for mothers and children; improved sanitation; reduction in complications for people with long-term conditions like HIV, hypertension and diabetes because they are seeking ongoing health care from the facilities. I am very proud of that!"

This story has been edited for length. To read the full version, please visit www.amrefcanada.org/stories

Photo by Steve Kagia

IN FOCUS

COVID-19 IN AFRICA: The Results of Your Support

When the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic on March 11, 2020 we were already hard-at-work with communities and governments in sub-Saharan Africa to slow the spread of the disease.

Our deep roots in African countries from more than 60 years on the ground have made us a leader in the African response to this global health emergency.

Thanks to our Canadian supporters, we have been able to respond where our expertise is needed most in communities that are too often left behind because they are remote, poor or vulnerable in other ways.

Bringing together Amref Health Africa donors from around the world, we've accomplished so much together.

COVID-19 Response Results*

192,000+
111,000+
81,000+

community and facility health workers trained in prevention and treatment of COVID-19

trained through Amref Health Africa's mobile phone learning platform, Leap

trained through various other methods, including eLearning tools

75,000+

health workers provided with personal protective equipment (PPE), such as masks, gowns and gloves

13,000+

people tested for COVID-19 in Amref Health Africa clinics

3.9+ million

people reached with water, hygiene and sanitation supplies, such as clean water, handwashing stations, hand sanitizer and soap

*as of December 2020

Stories from the COVID-19 Frontlines

Amhara Region, Ethiopia

As COVID-19 raged around the world last spring, shortages of personal protective equipment (PPE) risked the lives of frontline health workers. At the Debrebirhan Health Centre in Ethiopia, health workers were provided with only two disposable face masks and 50ml of hand sanitizer per week.

As one of the health facilities that is part of our COVID-19 response project, with financial support from the Government

of Canada through Global Affairs Canada, the Debrebirhan Health Centre has now received medical masks, liquid hand sanitizer, medical waste disposal bins, eye goggles and handwashing soap. The essential supplies have helped to fill critical gaps in health care service, and ensure the safety of health care workers.



Keur Massar District, Senegal*

With the support of Amref Health Africa, through its COVID-19 response program, we have benefited from online training (via WhatsApp) on the pandemic. Taking into account public health measures decreed by the Ministry of Health to control the spread of COVID-19, I was able to carry out awareness-raising activities through caravans to demonstrate proper handwashing technique in markets and through visits to individual households. I was also able to raise awareness of the importance of continuing to go to health clinics for essential care (pre- and post-natal services, childhood vaccination etc.), and how to ensure compliance with public health measures, especially wearing of masks and handwashing.

While carrying out these activities, I received personal protective equipment, such as masks, and a special thermometer for taking people's temperature so I could refer those who had fevers to the local health clinic for follow up to test for COVID-19."

Migori County, Kenya



Every time 24-year-old Kezia Adhiambo switched on the radio to listen to her favourite program, fear and panic gripped her because of the spike in COVID-19 infections reported in Kenya.

In November 2020, when she was four months pregnant, Kezia stopped attending her regular pre-natal clinics for fear of contracting COVID-19.

"I was really scared to go to the clinic because I thought I would expose myself to coronavirus," said Kezia.

Kezia decided to start going back to the pre-natal clinics after being advised by Syprose Anyango, a community health worker in charge of Kezia's community unit.

"Syprose convinced me to continue attending my clinic; she told

"We are now able to provide all our health workers and supporting staff with face masks needed on a daily basis. We have in our stocks sufficient bottles of hand sanitizer, which we can use for several months. We put hand sanitizers in each room of the health centre for health workers and clients to use. We all are able to take all the necessary precautions to prevent and control the spread of COVID-19, thanks to Amref Health Africa," said Mekonnen Aytenfis, Head of Debrebirhan Health Centre.

*translated from French



Makhfou Gueye (right), is President of the Community Actors and Secretary General of the Network of Community Actors in the District of Keur Massar, Senegal. Makhfou is one of the community members who has received training on COVID-19 through our project with financial support from the Government of Canada through Global Affairs Canada.

me ways of protecting myself from the virus when I visit the hospital," said Kezia.

Syprose, who is in charge of 18 households in Kezia's village, said: "We have worked extra hard to ensure that pregnant women get pre-natal and post-natal care. We are working tirelessly to ensure that no woman misses this important phase while they are pregnant. We have trained them to take precautions when they go to the clinic."

Equipped with skills from a comprehensive training from Amref Health Africa with financial support from the Government of Canada through Global Affairs Canada, Syprose and other community health workers now feel more confident in serving their communities without fear and worry of contracting COVID-19.

Story by Maureen Cherongis, Amref Health Africa in Kenya
Photo by Kennedy Musyoka, Amref Health Africa in Kenya