



What a year this has been! 2020 is just days from ending, and while a part of me is breathing a sigh of relief, the other is taking stock of my blessings. My family—who live around the world—are safe. I am deeply grateful that we are healthy, happy, and have enough. People everywhere have been devastated by the pandemic. Even in your own family you will have experienced nervous times, hardship, and perhaps tragedy. I hold you in my prayers.

The poorest communities around the world will feel the lasting devastation of COVID the most. Lockdown losses will create major gaps in health care for years to come.

Dr. Miriam, East Africa Director for Save the Mothers, shared a story by video a few weeks ago (watch your email, I will share it with you). It is a story that highlights the injustice of care for mothers and babies in rural Uganda compared to the care available in Canada.



▲ Watch a video of Everline and Tonny at savethemothers.org/2020

All is not lost, you can help to fill the gaps.

Everline and Tonny, like so many couples expecting a baby excitedly attended antenatal (prenatal) care and they eagerly tracked special milestones. It was a complication-free pregnancy, as far as they knew. When Everline began to feel the contractions of labour, they went to the local health centre in Boroboro, a town in Northern Uganda.

Their son entered the world quickly, but he was weak. He was put on oxygen for a few hours to gain strength. Everline tried breastfeeding the baby, but he would not suckle. He was given glucose, which gave him energy to latch, initially.

When he began suckling, Everline thought, “everything will be alright.” She was wrong.

Only a few hours later, when Everline tried again, her tiny baby was too weak to take even a syringe of glucose. As she laid him back down, he went unconscious. The Clinic Officer was called. He said, “you should bring this child to Lira Referral Hospital,” 10 km away.

Tonny and Everline bundled up their little one and made their way to Lira without the help of ambulance or oxygen. When they reached the main gate of the hospital, Everline lifted the blanket covering him, and saw that her son, just a few days old, had died.



In Canada, a baby like this would have round-the-clock care. Instead, in this small ill-equipped health centre in Boroboro, he did not have what he needed to live.

This tragedy was most likely preventable. Imagine how different the same sequence of events would be in Canada. This family did not have access to the care we see as standard, such as ultrasounds during pregnancy, neonatal intensive care units, diagnostic tests, and antibiotics.

Globally, 2.4 million newborns die due to preventable causes with the first month of life every year. 200,000 mothers die giving life.

For Mary and Joseph, a couple with similar means and resources to Tonny and Everline, events unfolded differently. That this other impoverished couple delivered a healthy baby without much assistance in a dirty stable is an incredible act of God! This mean and low delivery room is meant to show us that great things rise from the humblest circumstances. It shows us the miracles can happen. It gives us hope in the darkest of times.

At the end of such a dark year, will you provide hope? It has never been more important to stand by mothers in East Africa. Since March, the health care system in places like Uganda and Tanzania has suffered and mothers are more at risk. **Your gift will help to fill the gap.**

The hope and care that Save the Mothers Game Changers inspire is nothing short of a miracle for many women and their babies. With the help of an STM Alumnus in their community, women have access to better health care, knowledge, and equity. A mother's pregnancy and delivery is transformed from a possible death sentence to a time of joy.

Beyond our game-changing alumni, our High Dependency Units are serving not just mothers, but COVID-19 patients, too. Your gifts mean even some of the most rural communities are served by trained, qualified, and competent health-care practitioners. It is the difference between life and death. But these services still require so much support to continue to operate.

You can provide these things. I invite you to give the gift of hope to a mother this year. Your donation of \$50, \$100, or \$200 will help to save not just mothers, but babies, too.

So much has been lost for East Africans living in poverty, but you can still make a difference.

Blessings for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year,

Deborah Mensah

Deborah Mensah
Executive Director
Save the Mothers



P.S. If you have not yet finished your Christmas shopping. I invite you to poke around our 'e-store.' There you will find many lovely and practical gifts including, beautiful embossed journals, Dr. Jean Chamberlain Froese's acclaimed book, *The Game Changers*, and, of course masks to protect you and others against COVID-19. Check it out! savethemothers.org/store

SAVE THE MOTHERS

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