Dear Friends,

ima *The acronym is pronounced "eema" which means Mother in Hebrew.*

International Midwife Assistance (IMA), based in Colorado, works with communities who are having crises in maternal and infant health. We educate midwives, doctors and nurses because skilled care providers prevent maternal and infant deaths.

This has been a year of big changes, and they are wonderful changes. In Uganda, students are beginning to graduate. We have formed a meaningful partnership with the Soroti District Health Office. We began meeting the needs of fifteen health centers that suffered the loss of USAID support and are also desperately understaffed. Ugandan news outlets and the Ministry of Health have been reporting on the serious shortage of nurses and midwives. The Ministry of Health reports that across Uganda, only 31% of approved health worker staffing positions are filled. A New Vision article published in May of this year reported that Uganda needs approximately 13,000 additional midwives and 11,000 additional nurses.

It has been my great hope that our students who desire to return home to work in and around Soroti could help address this serious shortage of qualified health workers. Recently, Sarah Akello and Peter Emuron from Eema's management team met with authorities and established a framework for our graduates to be assigned to the health facilities we've been supporting. These new graduate nurses and midwives will share their knowledge and energy with the facility staff. We'll start by placing just a few people next year. If successful, many more will follow in 2028.

This is the initiative that is very close to my heart. I fully believe that over time we can make a huge impact, modeling excellence in practice and spreading our doctrine of treating patients with kindness and dignity. As Peter puts it, "Beyond providing supplies, this is an opportunity to strengthen the people, skills and systems responsible for delivering healthcare to vulnerable mothers and their babies."



In Afghanistan, very soon now midwives will be able to access two modules of Helping Mothers Survive: Essential Care for Labor and Birth and Prolonged and Obstructed Labor, in Dari Farsi. This is the result of years of hard work, and next year we plan to continue with the translations.

Next year in Uganda, we hope to continue expanding the support we provide to the fifteen health centers. I recently reviewed Eema's budget requests. They want to begin providing Dopplers to the midwives and organize a mobile family planning clinic. They are trying to maximize what they can do while being mindful of funding. They are trying to keep the increase request to $20,000 US dollars – not very much for 18 Dopplers and an outreach clinic! I am so impressed with their work and feel very honored to be a part of it. I cannot thank you enough for making it possible.

Peace,
Jennifer Elizabeth Braun

jbmidwife@midwifeassist.org | PO BOX 916, Boulder CO. 80306 | midwifeassist.org

Vehicle Donation

Do you have a car, truck, trailer, boat, RV, or motorcycle, working or not, that you might choose to donate rather than sell, or deal with having towed away? Do you know someone who might? Support IMA by donating it!

Visit midwifeassist.org for more information or simply call CARS, our donation partner, at (855) 500-7433

Donate Your Appreciated Stock

We are able to receive your gift of appreciated stock.

Please contact Jennifer at (303) 588-1663 or email jbmidwife@midwifeassist.org

Donate Online

Donate now through December 8 and every donation you make will be boosted by a portion of a one-million-dollar incentive fund, made possible by Colorado Gives Foundation and FirstBank. Plus, if you set up a new monthly donation, Colorado Gives Foundation will match your first monthly donation up to $100! This is a fantastic opportunity to double your impact and support us.

To donate go to coloradogives.org and type in IMA or scan this QR code >

Scan To Donate

Dear IMA & Toto

"Toto" *is an Ateso word for mother and is often used as a title or honorific.*

Dear IMA and Toto Jennifer Braun,

Today, I write with gratitude in my heart, and praise on my lips.
I have completed my MBA at Uganda Martyrs University. I will graduate in 2027!
What once seemed impossible has become my testimony.

I come from a family where education rarely went this far, where dreams of higher learning seemed distant. Yet today, by God's grace and through your kindness, I have become the most educated person in my family. You did not just sponsor an education; you changed a destiny.

You saw potential where circumstances offered little hope. You opened a door that generations before me had never walked through. You did not simply invest in my studies; you invested in a family, a future, and generations yet unborn.

Because of you, a story has changed.
Because of you, a dream has come alive.
Because of you, my generation will inherit a different story.

Toto, I will never take this blessing for granted.

My promise is simple: What you invested in me, I will invest in others.
I will pour my knowledge, skills and heart into Eema Centre Soroti, serving our mothers, protecting our babies, strengthening our health systems and contributing to the transformation of our beloved Teso community.

My MBA will not be a title to display, but a responsibility to fulfil. My education will not end with graduation; it will begin a greater journey of service.

When I finally walk across that graduation stage in 2027, I will carry more than a degree. I will carry your kindness, my family's hopes, and the dreams of everyone who will benefit from the opportunity you gave me.

Toto, you helped me go where my circumstances could never have taken me. And I pray that, through the life you helped build, many others will find their way too.
May God bless you, preserve your life, enlarge your blessings and reward you in ways human words cannot express.

Some people give money. Others give opportunities. But a rare few give people a new beginning. You gave me mine.

With love, honour and a lifetime of gratitude,
Emuron Peter



Emuron Peter
MBA Graduate
Uganda Martyrs University



Jennifer Braun
IMA Executive Director

Remote Discussions with Eema Scholarship Students

I was really looking forward to visiting with the students we sponsor through Eema's Scholarship for Medical Education in person in October. As part of my due diligence, I visit students at their school and meet with a faculty member who knows them. I see students' grades twice a year, but talking with a teacher allows me to hear personal comments about the student. Then, using a questionnaire we designed as a framework, I interview each student. I learn how the person is doing at school, and I acquire helpful information about their school. We document information about schools for the benefit of future students.

I was super bummed not to be able to make those visits in person because of the Ebola outbreak and the Middle East war. Travel is getting more challenging as I age, no doubt, but the value of the meetings is more than worth it. Seeing faces and expressions and hearing in person is much better than reading a written summary and reviewing grades. So, I was pleasantly surprised to learn that the Uganda online network was much stronger than it was in 2024 (the last time I needed to interview remotely). We rarely had to reschedule an interview due to network instability, and we had coherent, fluid conversations online. I could see students' expressions and hear subtle things like hesitation, and I could share in their exuberance.

There is no question that we have an extraordinary group of students. In Uganda, important exam results - University finals, exams that determine whether high school students move on to the next year, all types - are reported in the newspaper and scrutinized by the public. There is a keen interest in education. The most recently completed semester was a low-water mark for Ugandan higher education students, as an extremely high number of students failed to pass the exams required to continue to the next semester.

During that incredibly challenging semester when so many students across Uganda didn't make it through final exams, all but one of ours, 36 of 37, sailed through. And I had a very good interview with the one who did not. He clearly described what his problem was and is currently mastering the information that held him up. I was struck by the maturity he demonstrated by figuring out the problem and creating a solution. I find this group to be a phenomenal collection of talent.

The discussions were so uplifting. I met with folks at 8:00 am Colorado time because that is 5:00 pm there, a good time for a Zoom meeting at the end of the day. And all October long, I began my days so happy. Many of the folks in the program are on target to graduate in 2027. Not only are they gaining knowledge and credentials, they are also clearly growing in wisdom and maturity. They are so happy and grateful. My heart is overflowing after many of these conversations.



One question I ask everyone is whether they think they are studying the right subject. I don't want anyone to feel trapped in a field that feels like a bad fit. I want to make a space where someone could come forward and potentially change course. This group, the people who staffed the Teso Safe Motherhood clinic, had strong ideas about what they wanted to do based on already having worked in a clinical setting. So far, only two people wanted a change, and both said so at the outset of the program. They were both very good midwives, but when given the opportunity to study at a university, one chose to pursue a degree in medical laboratory science, and one chose a degree in medical imaging. They are both very happy and doing well. Those life changes would never have been possible without this scholarship program.

Everyone is unanimous: they are studying the right things. The question is toward the end of the questionnaire, and the answers to this question are often what left me joyful….

Are you considering changing your field of study?

"I want to remain in the course, no change of mind!
I am more fired up and optimistic even than before. No doubts!"

"No, no change. In fact, I would like to specialize."

"I have no idea of changing. I was given the liberty to choose the right course, and this was my dream."

"Absolutely not! I can't make any change. I'm in the right place."

"I choose to continue with midwifery, I am passionate about supporting women and babies.

"I am not thinking of changing, I am very happy. I really love medical imaging. I really enjoy it. I am not about to change!"

On and on, everyone is feeling happy and proud of what they are accomplishing. Everyone is articulating a sense of purpose and commitment to a better future.

"I'm a better person now, compared to coming here (university) in July 2024, I am better. Just the fact of doing a course that is going to help people. I am also proud of my colleagues that I am moving with, we are improving together. I want to thank you for all that, for making me a better person."



Epilu Elly
third-year medical student at
Kampala International University

"I am pleased to announce that I have successfully completed my Master of Midwifery Science at Lira University, and I look forward to my graduation on 20th November 2026. This has been a rewarding and transformative journey that has strengthened my knowledge, research skills and professional competencies in midwifery. It has also deepened my commitment to improving maternal and newborn health through evidence-based practice.

As I look ahead, I am eager to put my qualifications and skills into practice and contribute to strengthening midwifery services, clinical practice and the training of future healthcare professionals.



Aongorit Florence
Pursuing a post-graduate diploma in medical education
at Clarke International University, to graduate in May 2027

"As I approach the completion of my studies, my desire is to give back to the community by using the knowledge, skills, and experience I have acquired, through your support, to make a positive difference in people's lives. I hope to contribute to improve healthcare services, promote health education, support vulnerable individuals, and provide compassionate care to those who need it most. I believe that the opportunity Eema has given me will not only transform my life but will also enable me to positively impact the lives of many others.



As I prepare to complete my studies and begin the next chapter of my professional journey, I promise to continue working hard, uphold the values of compassion, integrity, and service, and use my education to contribute meaningfully to society.

Okori Mary Magdalene
currently in her final semester, Bachelor of Nursing Student



A Year of Progress, Hope & Meaningful Impact

Reflections from Sarah Akello
Executive Director, Eema Centre Soroti

As I reflect on this year, my heart is filled with gratitude for the lives we have been privileged to touch through the work of Eema Centre Soroti.

One of the joys of this journey has been witnessing the progress of the students supported through the education programme. Seeing them advance in their studies, overcome challenges and move closer to achieving their dreams reminds me that investing in education is an investment in the future of our communities.

We have also continued supporting expectant mothers, including helping women in labour access health facilities when transportation is a challenge. Every mother who gets the opportunity to reach a health facility safely is a reminder of why this work matters.

However, one of Eema's most profound impacts for me this year has been the introduction of ultrasound machines in our village health centres. For many expectant mothers, accessing an ultrasound scan previously meant travelling long distances and facing costs that were often beyond their means. Today, with the machines available in their local health centres and midwives trained to operate them, more mothers can access scans within their own communities.

What makes this especially meaningful is that we are not simply providing equipment; we are strengthening the capacity of our local health workers to serve their communities. The skills remain with the midwives, and the benefits continue to reach mothers who might otherwise have gone without this important service.

These experiences remind me that meaningful change does not always begin with grand gestures. Sometimes, it begins with listening to people's needs, identifying practical solutions and giving communities the tools and support they need to move forward.

I am deeply grateful to IMA and everyone whose generosity makes this work possible. Behind every student progressing in school, every mother reaching a health facility and every expectant mother accessing a scan is an opportunity that might otherwise have been missed.

As we look ahead, my hope is that we can reach even more underserved families across Teso, bringing education, healthcare and hope closer to those who need them most.

For me, this is what the work of Eema Centre Soroti is about: not simply what we provide today, but the lasting difference we help create in people's lives.



In Memoriam of Jacquie Clayton

It is with great sadness that I write that Jacquie Clayton, a long-time IMA volunteer, passed away this year. Jacquie was a public health nurse and was instrumental in establishing Teso Safe Motherhood's mobile vaccine clinics. I cannot write anything better than to quote from Jacquie's obituary: "*Jacquie will be remembered as a quiet, gracious, determined and above all, genuinely caring person.*"

We greatly appreciate the donations we've received in Jacquie's honor, and we believe that Jacquie appreciates them, too.

Thank You!

IMA is a small organization that gets big things done. Much of the work we do happens in other places – Eema Soroti has a much bigger footprint than IMA USA. I like it that way. I think we should put our resources where they are most needed, empowering our partners to do their work where they are. They are the center of this organization, but of course, we here in the USA are vital to IMA. ***Our friends in Uganda and Afghanistan need our support. It is you, our donors, who make all of this possible. I thank you most sincerely.*** *I'd like to thank the following folks for some specific things. I deeply appreciate you all.*

Thank you to ***Rev. Marty McCarthy***, who stepped off the IMA board of directors after nine years of service. We are very grateful to Marty.

Alice Wang, the high school student who began fundraising and sending mosquito nets to Soroti last year, sent ***another 2,000*** in September. This is a mind-blowing achievement. The direct impact of TWO THOUSAND nets is huge. Malaria kills an almost unbelievable number of people, and bed nets prevent that. Thank you, Alice!





The volunteer team members who translate the Helping Mothers Survive materials do so much work, going through document after document with a fine-tooth comb. Their work is producing vital translations of valuable educational materials into Dari-Farsi for Afghan midwives to access online. Then those materials are made more accessible through webinars in Dari Farsi. This work can only happen because of them: ***Shakila Haidari***, ***P*** in Afghanistan, ***Massoma Jafari*** and ***Farzana Darkhani***.



When my son ***Cooper Braun*** and I were in Canada filming a webinar, ***Massoma Jafari and her family*** showed us the most fantastic hospitality. Thank you!

Thank you to the team of volunteers who put the paper newsletter mailing together. Last year that was ***Kristin van Konynenburg, Charlotte Tyson & Pam Aultman*** (representing the ***Longmont Satellite Rotary Club), Lorraine Fairmont, Jan Lapetino, Carmela Weber, Claudia Wyrick and Jody Shevins.***

Every year, when I reflect on the months gone by and all the wonderful people who make IMA what it is, I have to thank ***Carmela Weber*** for all her expertise and for her patient willingness to help me over and over again. Since IMA's inception in 2005, all the things that I needed to know to make IMA work, and in fact did not know, Carmela did. She has taught me almost everything that isn't midwifery.

Most everything else, I learned from IMA's accountant ***Elke Adler***. Accountant doesn't really cover it. There aren't many things I do that don't require some sort of help from Elke. I am very grateful.

The artist who produces all our materials after Elke and I finish writing them is ***Terri McAllister***. We are very grateful to Terri for her ability to transform our words into this beautiful newsletter.

IMA has two new board members. Thank you and welcome to ***Linda Cohen*** and ***Alexa Clearly Townsend***.



"Hello, IMA community! I'm Linda Cohen and I'm honored to join the board. I look forward to bringing energy and perspective from my long career as a CNM in public health. What I admire most about IMA is that the model is based on sharing knowledge and has exponential impact. I hope to be able to participate first hand in this experience. Outside of my professional life, I enjoy our nature, travel, ceramics, and anything that involves children or animals."



Alexa Townsend is an inaugural Certified Midwife student at the University of Colorado. She brings a rich background in New York City's marketing sector, where she led campaigns for brands dedicated to female empowerment. Today, Alexa bridges her communication expertise with a passion for healthcare, focusing her midwifery career on uplifting women and improving maternal and neonatal outcomes globally. Her unique combination of corporate experience and commitment to compassionate, evidence-based care offers a distinctive, multi-faceted perspective to IMA.