

The women who stepped up to fill the mummy gap

Motherhood was once defined by childbirth. Today, that meaning is shifting. Many women step into the role without giving birth – stepmothers, aunts, grandmothers, older sisters and foster mothers raising children as their own. **Violah Niwaha** brings us the incredible stories.

BECOMING THE AUNTY-MUMMY

Kellen Ekyarikora stepped into motherhood when her nieces and nephews were still toddlers. Their parents worked full-time and had considered sending the children to boarding school at a very young age. But Ekyarikora felt they needed a home, not an institution – especially in their formative years.

"They needed care, guidance and someone present," she says.

So Ekyarikora took them in, raising them alongside her own two children. Under one roof, seven children grew up as one family. Motherhood became her daily work – she was present, attentive and intentional.

"I trained my heart to offer unfailing love and unconditional care because parenting requires boundless love," Ekyarikora says.

She taught them to pray, to care for one another, and to love genuinely – values she believes shape a

person's path in life.

Today, Aunt Kellen is blind and often unwell due to old age, but she carries a deep sense of pride in the life she chose. The children she raised with patience, faith and love now stand by her, caring for her and ensuring she lacks nothing.

HOW MY STEPMOTHER LOVED ME!

Oliver Kemigisha speaks warmly of her stepmother, Joy Mirembe. In a society where stepmothers are often portrayed as harsh or unkind, her experience tells a different story – one defined by care, consistency, and genuine love.

"I didn't realise she was not my biological mother," Kemigisha recalls. "I only found out through whispers when she wasn't around, and my father later confirmed it."

Her stepmother was present in the everyday moments that shape a childhood – preparing meals, checking schoolwork, offering guidance, and providing a steady, reassuring presence.

Now a mother herself, Kemigisha appreciates that love even more. She understands, in a deeper way, what sacrifice and unconditional love truly mean.

I STEPPED UP WHEN MUM DIED

For Patricia Agarukiire Mulumba, the call to motherhood came too early – during her Primary Seven vacation. When her mother passed away, the responsibility of caring for her younger siblings fell to her as the firstborn.

"I mothered my siblings, and today I am proud of it," Mulumba says.

With little guidance and minimal support, she learnt to meet the household's needs one day at a time. She took on everything – feeding, comforting, guiding, and doing her best to keep life stable.

"There were days I hawked pancakes before going to school," Mulumba recalls.

The small income helped



Mulumba

RAISED BY MY GRANDMOTHER

When Joshua Mutungi speaks about Mother's Day, his thoughts turn to his grandmother, Jolly Night, affectionately known as Kaaka Jolly. At 78, she carries a story many might overlook, yet one that reveals motherhood in its rawest form.

In her old age, Kaaka Jolly became a mother again, taking in her grandchildren – some orphaned, others abandoned.

"We were seven children, and the eldest was in Primary Five," Mutungi recalls.

Three of the seven were his biological siblings; both their parents had died. "Kaaka worked with her hands to keep the household going," he says.

She sold matooke, dug in other people's gardens, and took on any small job she could find to provide for the children in her care. There was no steady income or safety net – only daily effort shaped by hope and love.

For Mutungi, Kaaka Jolly is more than a grandmother; she is the reason they grew up with a sense of home. Her story is a reminder that motherhood is sometimes sustained by a love that refuses to let go.



Kaaka Jolly and Mutungi

cover basic necessities at home.

Today, her siblings are grown, educated, and thriving in their own lives. Mulumba herself is a life coach, professional counsellor, and author, specialising in psychosocial wellness, marriage and parenting. She is also the managing director and founder of Perfect Evolvers Ltd, a company dedicated to mentorship, team building and family support services.

SANYU FOSTERS

ABANDONED CHILDREN

In choosing to foster, Evas Sanyu embodies a powerful truth: Sometimes, the greatest act of motherhood is making room for a child who needs a home.

"Every child deserves a home and to be loved," Sanyu says.

Driven by compassion – and supported by her husband – Sanyu has opened her home to as many as six children at a time. They grow, learn and live alongside her biological children, sharing life under one roof.

For Sanyu, fostering is not an occasional act of kindness; it is a calling. She looks beyond each child's circumstances and meets them with love, stability and a sense of belonging.

The journey, however, has not always been easy. At times, her own children have questioned her decision to take in more children. Sanyu uses those moments to teach a deeper lesson about life and responsibility.

"I tell them, when the Lord blesses you, your responsibility is to bless others in need."



Sanyu