



## **GRANDMOTHERS TO GRANDMOTHERS CAMPAIGN**

***“Grandmothers have emerged as the unsung heroes of Africa. These magnificently courageous women bury their own children and then look after their orphaned grandchildren, calling on astonishing reserves of love and emotional resilience.”***

**Stephen Lewis**

The Stephen Lewis Foundation launched the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign in March 2006 in response to the emerging crisis faced by grandmothers in sub-Saharan Africa. It began with only a few groups of committed Canadian grandmothers, and has evolved into a dynamic and responsive movement that mobilizes support in Canada for Africa's grandmothers. Currently, more than 240 groups across Canada belong to the Campaign. Many of the groups have organized into regional and national networks in order to support each other's development, and fundraising and advocacy efforts.

## **AFRICAN GRANDMOTHERS**

African grandmothers are central to the life of their communities. With almost no support, they have stepped forward to care for millions of children orphaned by AIDS, sometimes as many as 10 to 15 in one household. They display astonishing reserves of love, courage and emotional resilience, even while grieving the loss of their own adult children.

The Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign raises funds to support the tremendous work by and for grandmothers living in the midst of the AIDS pandemic in Africa. With these funds, The Stephen Lewis Foundation supports African grandmothers with food, health care, school fees and school uniforms for their grandchildren, income-generating programmes, counselling, social support, essential shelter, and other necessities.

Grassroots organizations in Africa run by and for grandmothers are sharing insights, deepening their expertise, collaborating with other local organizations, and building their capacity to turn the tide of the AIDS pandemic.

**grandmothers to grandmothers**

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### CAMPAIGN GOALS

Through the Stephen Lewis Foundation, the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign supports African grandmothers who are turning the tide of the AIDS pandemic at the community level. Members of the Campaign share three goals:

- Raise funds to meet the needs of African grandmothers and the children in their care;
- Listen to African grandmothers, respect their expertise and amplify their voices, in order to promote authentic and substantive responses to the pandemic in Africa;
- Build solidarity among African and Canadian grandmothers in order to motivate and sustain the vital work of turning the tide of AIDS in Africa.

Canadian grandmothers' groups are tremendously active in their communities. They put on concerts, organize card tournaments, sell jewellery, and march on Parliament Hill. They visit countless schools and community organizations. They bake, cook, sew, knit, paint, write and even ride motorcycles – all to raise funds and awareness for grandmothers in sub-Saharan Africa.

### HISTORY OF THE CAMPAIGN

The Foundation held the first international **Grandmothers Gathering** on the eve of the XVI International AIDS Conference in Toronto. One hundred Africans and two hundred Canadian grandmothers gathered for three days of workshops, run by the grandmothers themselves, on topics ranging from grief to traditional songs, from depression to fundraising, and from stigma to the care of children orphaned by AIDS.

The Gathering provided an international stage for African grandmothers to speak about their lives, voice concerns, and inform the support that was to come – both from Canadians and from the international community. It was an opportunity for Canadian grandmothers to hear the testimonies of African grandmothers first-hand, and for both Canadians and Africans to recognize and affirm a shared identity as grandmothers and leaders.



Together they created **The Toronto Statement** – a joint statement of commitment and intent, and the result of three days and many lifetimes of laughter, tears, dance, song, pledges and promises.

Canadian and African grandmothers *“have within us everything needed to surmount seemingly insurmountable obstacles. We are strong, we are determined, we are resourceful, we are creative, we are resilient, and we have the wisdom that comes with age and experience.”*

African grandmothers *“do not need a great deal, but we do need enough: enough to safeguard the health of our grandchildren and of ourselves; enough to put food in their mouths, roofs over their heads and clothes on their backs; enough to place them in school and keep them there long enough to secure their futures. For ourselves, we need training, because the skills we learned while raising our children did not prepare us for parenting grandchildren who are bereaved, impoverished, confused and extremely vulnerable. In the long term, we need security. We need regular incomes and economic independence in order to erase forever our constant worry about how and whether our families will survive. We grandmothers deserve hope. Our children, like all children, deserve a future. We will not raise children for the grave.”*

**Toronto Statement**

Since the Gathering, the **Foundation has hosted many African grandmothers in Canada – to continue to share their experiences and expertise with Canadian grandmothers.** African grandmothers came to Canada to speak publicly about the impact of the AIDS pandemic on their lives, and to participate in public educational forums, working through the Foundation to meet with Canadian grandmothers and the Canadian public at large. Grandmother activists from the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) in South Africa attended the **Grandparents Solidarity March** on September 8, 2007 in Ottawa, speaking on the steps of Parliament to powerfully attest to the importance of grassroots political action.

In late February 2008, the Foundation organized the first ever **educational trip for a delegation of 12 Canadian grandmothers to projects** in Uganda, South Africa and Swaziland. Despite the demands on their time and resources, a few projects expressed their excitement and readiness to welcome Canadian grandmother-supporters – accompanied and facilitated by the Foundation. They wanted to show, Canadian grandmothers first-hand the tremendous impact of their support to community-based work at the frontlines of the AIDS pandemic.

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grandmothers to grandmothers



In May 2010, 42 Canadian grandmothers visited Swaziland with the Stephen Lewis Foundation as delegates at the first **African Grandmothers Gathering**. The Gathering brought together hundreds of grandmothers from across sub-Saharan Africa to share their experiences, hopes and expertise. Together they created the **Manzini Statement**, the African grandmothers' clarion call to the world which calls for action and recognition of the pivotal role they are playing in the effort to turn the tide of AIDS in Africa.

### LOOKING FORWARD

Canadian grandmothers are inspired by the indomitability of African grandmothers, and they, in turn, are encouraged and buoyed by the commitment of Canadian grandmothers. The Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign is an indispensable wellspring of support and solidarity for African grandmothers. And, as the Toronto Statement decreed, Canadian grandmothers "will not rest until African grandmothers can rest".

The number of groups keeps growing in hamlets, towns and cities across Canada, for in every one of them there are concerned elder-stateswomen – the grandmothers.

**To find a grandmothers' group in your area, or to start one of your own, visit [www.grandmotherscampaign.org](http://www.grandmotherscampaign.org), or contact us directly:**

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