

CLASS Act

SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

Fall 2017 – In this issue:

- Access to Education
- Powered By Love: A Grandmothers' Movement to End AIDS in Africa
- SLF Partner in Action

Access to Education

Excerpt from the 2016 Year in Review, The Resilience Effect and the Power of Community



Photo: Alexis MacDonald/SLF

Phoebe Education Fund for AIDS Orphans and Vulnerable Children, Uganda

Educational support is absolutely essential, not only because the poverty and family collapse caused by HIV&AIDS is depriving children of an education, but because staying in school has proven to be one of the most certain protections against HIV infection. However, in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, people living in poverty simply cannot afford it. Prohibitive school fees and even the incidental costs of books and uniforms can be insurmountable obstacles for many families. The Stephen Lewis Foundation (SLF)'s partners see education as the key to turning life around for children who have been so badly disadvantaged by HIV&AIDS.

What makes community-based support for education so effective?

Children who are orphaned and vulnerable due to HIV&AIDS are facing so many different challenges; they need multi-dimensional care and support. SLF partners pay for uniforms and supplies along with school fees; host after-school clubs and teens clubs; provide tutorial support and

one-on-one mentorship. Community-based organizations monitor the children's performance and trouble-shoot with parents and teachers about problems. They run soup kitchens and provide school lunches; conduct life skills classes and offer personal guidance and counselling. They work with school staff and administrations to create non-stigmatizing and welcoming learning environments; negotiate for higher education bursaries and scholarships for the youth who graduate; and offer vocational training for the youth who have dropped out, or who never had the chance to attend school.

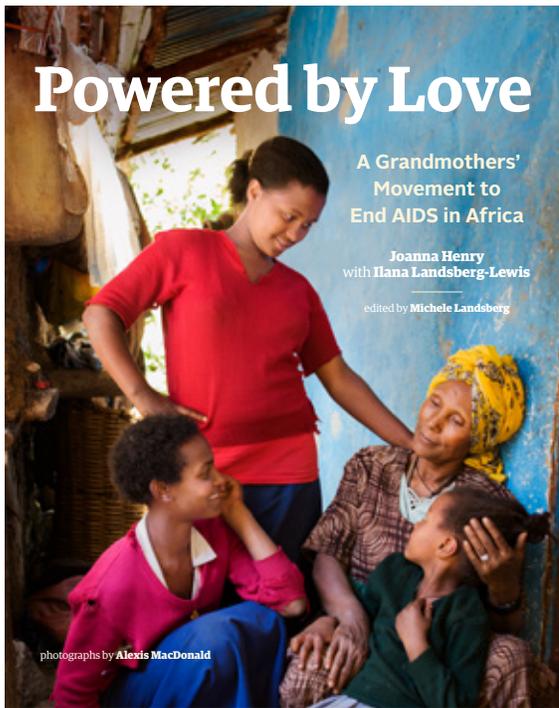
Girls face additional challenges, and without dedicated support, their rates of school completion are far lower than boys. To correct this imbalance, many organizations make it a priority to pay for girls' school fees, and their programming addresses key issues such as: parents keeping girls out of school to perform household labour or refusing to use family resources on girls' education; girls frequently missing days at school because they lack sanitary

supplies; harassment in schools; lack of knowledge about their sexual and reproductive health rights; and teenage pregnancy, which is a major reason why girls abandon their education and is also, too often, accompanied by HIV infection.

These organizations are tracking the progress of the students they support, and they're reporting that the vast majority of their students are attending classes regularly, progressing to the next grade and ultimately graduating. They are now seeing children go on to university and college, and start employment and apprenticeships. More than this, though, access to education is affecting every aspect of these children's lives, and the signs of positive change are joyously abundant.

Spotlight on School Fundraisers

- ▶ To mark Mother's Day, students at École Valois in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan organized a dinner theatre raising \$1,800.00 to support the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign. While the students organized the dinner, students from another local school, École Providence performed "Grease" at the dinner.
- ▶ Monsignor Paul Baxter Catholic School in Nepean, Ontario raised over \$1,100.00 also in support of the Grandmothers Campaign, through a series of fundraising and awareness initiatives.
- ▶ Students at Etobicoke School of the Arts raised \$700 using their art as activism to support African grandmothers and the SLF. They hosted events at the school, including a Spring Concert featuring students and recent grads.



New Resource!

Powered by Love: A Grandmothers' Movement to End AIDS in Africa

In the face of overwhelming loss, grandmothers across Africa have stepped in to hold families and communities together, raising their grandchildren orphaned by HIV&AIDS. Now for the first time, the story of these indomitable women is documented in a new book, **Powered by Love: A Grandmothers' Movement to End AIDS in Africa**. Drawing on hundreds of interviews with grandmothers across sub-Saharan Africa, Canada and the UK, this book tells the story of an incredible movement of solidarity from the perspective of grandmothers themselves. These stories and photos give insight into the impact African grandmothers have in the midst of the AIDS pandemic.

Powered By Love is available in bookstores October 10, 2017. Book launches will happen in communities across Canada during October and November. To learn more about the book or to find out about events in your community this Fall, please visit:

www.grandmotherspoweredbylove.com

For more information, contact community@stephenlewisfoundation.org



Girls at Etafeni Day Care Trust, South Africa

Children and youth are building resilience amongst this generation.

SLF Partners in Action

With more than 14 million young people orphaned by AIDS, the majority of whom live in sub-Saharan Africa, community-based organizations are integral to ensuring that these children and youth have the support they need. Young girls, in particular, are most vulnerable. HIV infection rates affecting young girls are growing. Seven out of ten new infections for teenagers in sub-Saharan Africa are among girls. Girls are often the first to be pulled out of school to help care for and support families in crisis. Grassroots organizations provide a multitude of services. They raise funds to pay for school fees, uniforms, and supplies; they provide counselling, psychosocial support and HIV testing. They run peer education programmes and innovative art and drama therapy programmes. The interventions of community-based organizations for children and youth are building resilience amongst this generation.

Maasai Women Development Organization (MWEDO) has been working for girls' and women's rights, including getting and keeping girls in school in northern Tanzania since 1999. The organization was founded by three local women who had themselves struggled to access education and combat stigma around female independence and protection. They are experts in what is needed and what works. They know, without a doubt, that girls' education is one of the best forces of real and lasting change for women.

MWEDO runs its own secondary school and supports attendance at other local schools through its Education Access Program. MWEDO does not stop at support for school attendance. Their holistic programmes include support on issues of sexual and reproductive health, human rights, nutrition, literacy, employment, mentorship and psychosocial care. They work with the community to advocate for a deeper understanding and recognition of girls' and women's rights, and of the benefits of continued education at every level of household, community and society.