

*In the last 30 years, 28 million people have died of AIDS in Sub Saharan Africa. Over 17 million children have been orphaned - nearly twice the number of children in all of Canada.*

*Imagine this is your life. You are widowed. Your husband has died of AIDS and it is likely you are infected too. Three of your adult children have died, and so have your sisters and brothers, your neighbours and friends. Now you are responsible for caring for your grandchildren, your siblings' children and your heart breaks for the orphaned and abandoned children you know in your village.*

*You can see no hope for the future. In despair, you sit on the graves of your children and wait to die. Without a pension, food security or a home of your own, how will you feed, clothe and educate the children in your care?*

*This was the situation for thousands of African grandmothers when the Stephen Lewis Foundation (SLF) began to work with community agencies 10 years ago. The goal of the foundation at that time was to ease the pain of AIDS in Africa. In 2006, they recognized that grandmothers were the caregivers for a generation of orphans. They alone, held the future hope of Africa in their hands. African and Canadian grandmothers were brought together to talk and listen, and the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign was born.*

*After 10 years, our funding has done more than ease the pain of AIDS. In communities where the SLF has worked for 10 years, the tide of AIDS has begun to turn. Hope is restored as grandmothers and orphaned children receive grief counseling, training for income generation, support to pay for school fees and uniforms. Grandmothers produce food for themselves and sell the surplus. They set up care points to feed the countless children who would have nowhere else to eat. They fan out on foot to provide palliative care to the dying.*

*In addition, the funding has enabled African women to go beyond subsistence. They are now on the frontlines of the pandemic as agents of change, experts in the struggle to overcome the pandemic - working valiantly to fight stigma, raise awareness, and demand their human rights.*

*You may have heard there is an end to AIDS. It is true, here in the west where we have education, access to nutritious food and sophisticated medical care it is possible to live a normal life span. This is not so in Africa. There are still millions of new infections each year and only half of those infected are receiving*

*the medications they need. It is also true that the economic and social loss of almost 30 million people in 30 years has torn the social fabric beyond recognition. The end of AIDS is, so far, an empty promise in Africa. So the projects that the SLF supports are still very important and necessary. 90% of the funds raised go directly to community-based projects, working in holistic ways to mend the social fabric rent by the pandemic. The funding gives hope to grandmothers and the orphans in their care.*

*Please help us to stand in solidarity with African grandmothers who are an indomitable force of love, care, resilience, compassion and power.*