

# Granny Bulletin

*January 26, 2007*

*The **Granny Bulletin** is a bi-weekly update on the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign, intended to keep grandmother's groups across Canada informed about, and connected to, the grandmothers and grassroots projects in Africa, that are supported through their dedicated fundraising and awareness-raising efforts.*

## **UPCOMING OPPORTUNITIES**

The Foundation is currently making plans to launch two films, "**Women: the Face of HIV/AIDS**" and "**A Generation of Orphans**" on International Women's Day and Mother's Day, respectively. We are asking grandmother's groups if you would be interested in hosting events to screen the films in your communities! We will provide you with advance copies of the films, and on Mother's Day, a draft press release that you can adapt and send out to your local media.

We'd like to consult you on a project we'd like to put in motion. We want to invite a few of the African grandmothers (some of whom attended the Gathering in August) to Canada on Mother's Day to share their experiences and provide updates on what is happening in their communities. Depending on time, resources and other factors, we are hoping to make it possible for these African grandmothers to travel to a few Canadian communities to meet grandmother's groups and attend screenings of the Orphans film and speak to the issue!

If you are interested in organizing a screening of one or both of the films, please let Julie know as soon as possible, by email at: [campaign@stephenlewisfoundation.org](mailto:campaign@stephenlewisfoundation.org).

More details are included in this letter from Micol Zarb, Director of Communications:

*Dear Grandmothers,*

### **Plans for International Women's Day**

*To celebrate International Women's Day (IWD) this year, the Foundation will premiere the film "**Women: the Face of HIV/AIDS**" at a Toronto venue on March 7. In doing so, we will highlight another major area of our work – supporting women who are ill and struggling to survive with HIV and AIDS (as you know, we launched the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign to commemorate IWD last year).*

*The screening of the film will be followed by a question and answer period with Stephen Lewis and two of our African consultants who have personally visited many of the grassroots organizations we support. We are currently working to secure a free venue*

that can accommodate the media and the public. We hope to use this event as a fundraising tool to introduce new donors to our work. We have chosen to hold the event on the eve of International Women's Day, which gives the media time to file their stories to run on the actual day, March 8. In addition to launching the Women's film, SLF will also issue a press release to the media with a special International Women's Day message from Stephen.

### **A film trilogy:**

This half hour film is the second in a trilogy about our work to support grandmothers, orphans and women in Africa. As you know, the first film in the trilogy "Grandmothers: The Unsung Heroes of Africa" was premiered at the August Gathering and shown several times in conjunction with the International AIDS Conference. The third film "**A Generation of Orphans**" will be launched in conjunction with Mother's Day in May (more on that below!).

### **Ideas for grandmothers groups:**

Now that we have a network of over 120 grandmothers groups across the country, we hope that some of you may wish to organize your own screenings on March 8 to celebrate International Women's Day. It would be a nice opportunity for you to speak about what your group is doing on the one-year anniversary of the launch of the Grandmothers Campaign and to get more people involved with your efforts.

Depending on what your group decides (and what type of venue is available to you) the film screening could take place in your home, your church, community centre or club. As usual, we will leave the organization and creative brainstorming up to you! If you are interested in organizing a screening for March 8, SLF will provide your group with a special advance copy of the film on DVD. We will also provide you with a copy of Stephen's International Women's Day message to share with others (note: this will only be released to the media on March 7 at the screening).

If you are unable to screen the film on March 8, don't worry. Each grandmothers group will receive a copy of the film (same as we did with the Grandmothers Film) by the end of March.

### **Plans for Mother's Day**

For Mother's Day this year (May 13), we would like to launch "**A Generation of Orphans**" the third film in the trilogy. Unlike International Women's Day, where we will give Stephen the opportunity to deliver a special message to the media on behalf of the Foundation, we hope that all of the grandmothers groups across Canada will use Mother's Day 2007 as an opportunity to deliver their own message – as mothers and grandmothers - about the campaign and the work you are doing to raise awareness and funds and build solidarity. We would like to take some of the sentimentality of Mothers' Day and put some of your strength, determination and effectiveness into a message

*which honours those in Africa who are so valiantly and courageously working to deal with the devastating effects of HIV/AIDS on their families. SLF hopes to invite several African grannies to Canada to share their experiences and discuss what is happening in their communities. Depending on time, resources, and other factors, these grannies may be able to travel to a few Canadian cities to share their experiences with you. This could be a good opportunity for you to showcase the Orphans Film and have some of the grannies – African and Canadian –speak afterwards. Canadian grannies could discuss campaign activities and their experience at the August Gathering and African grannies can speak about their lives and their own experiences caring for their orphan grandchildren. Some of you have talked about re-iterating the Toronto Statement.*

*Of course we are eager to have your thoughts on all of this – we have discussed it with some of you and the feedback has been most positive. We would like to hear from all of you, though, before we proceed, of course!*

***How the Foundation can help you:***

*For those who wish to organize a screening of the Orphans film in May, the Foundation will provide you with an advance DVD copy (ready in April). If you have someone with PR expertise in your group, or in your community, and you wish to reach out to the media around Mother’s Day, SLF can provide draft press materials (general press release, fact sheet with statistics, backgrounder on the campaign and the Gathering, etc) for you to adapt to your needs. Unfortunately, due to our small size we will not be able to provide you with individual press lists for your cities, or help you to manage media for your event. You can enlist the support of an experienced PR person for this – or you can simply reach out to the media that you know in your community – a simple approach can often be so effective. Also, coordination between grandmothers groups around Mother’s Day events will be essential to ensure that the same information is not sent to journalists several times. We have a lot of time to prepare for all of this. We just wanted to share our thoughts and get your initial feedback.*

*We look forward to hearing from you and hope that this trilogy of films will be useful in your community efforts!*

*Best regards,  
Micol*

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**PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS**

Since the Stephen Lewis Foundation was established in March 2003, we have funded over 170 projects in 14 sub-Saharan African countries. The two projects featured below, FOCHTA and Ekupholeni, address some aspects of the situation faced by grandmothers in Africa that grandmothers in Canada have been asking about: access to anti-retroviral drug therapy (ARVs), small grants and loans, and the need for psycho-

social support specifically for grandmothers. FOCHTA provides services that are complementary to the provision of anti-retroviral drug therapy in the Thyolo community, including monthly business training sessions. Ekupholeni provides counseling and support to those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS, including grandmothers whose ability to deal with pain and personal tragedy is inspiring, yet all too often taken for granted.

**Friends of Claude HO in Thyolo Association (FOCHTA)**

**Country: Malawi**

**Community: Thyolo**

**Project: Orphan Support and Small Loans Project**

**FOCHTA** provides comprehensive care for AIDS orphans. Its programmes are designed to enhance human dignity and alleviate poverty. The number of orphans in Thyolo is estimated at 26,000 and the percentage of people living below the poverty line is over 60%. Medecins Sans Frontieres currently operates in the Thyolo district and provides medical care to the community through anti-retroviral clinics and hospitals. FOCHTA aims to complement this work by focusing on socio-economic solutions for individuals infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. Specifically, FOCHTA funds secondary school meal programmes, school fees, clothing and other necessities. FOCHTA also operates a small loan program to families affected by HIV/AIDS, and offers counseling referral services and information on available treatment programmes.

With support from the Stephen Lewis Foundation, FOCHTA is:

- Assisting orphaned children to obtain secondary education by paying for school fees;
- Providing basic necessities like clothes, shoes, soap, pencils, etc. to each child. By the end of one year, all students in the programme will have at least two changes of clothes;
- Providing one wholesome meal each day during the school term for all of the children supported by the programme;
- Monitoring the progress of each student to ensure their life at school is of satisfactory condition and provide counseling where required;
- Providing small loans to widows, the chronically ill, girl-headed households, and destitute individuals;
- Providing monthly business training sessions to grantees prior to providing loans.

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**Ekupholeni Mental Health Centre**

**Country: South Africa**

**Project: Khululeka Counseling Programme**

*Amidst tears these women tell a harrowing story of loss:*

*“I miss my husband” a woman says quietly before sitting down.*

*“When my grandchildren are sleeping now they are always shouting, shouting. Why do they have to suffer?” says another between sobs.*

*“My husband...my child...my mother. May they rest in peace at all times.”*

*“People are always passing away from this HIV/AIDS. I wish to God for a cure.”*

*“May God be with me because I am feeling sick. I have no parents, no support; I am looking after all my grandchildren...”*

*When a woman weeps, as nearly all of them have, the group sings to relieve them, and the song grows in strength as it continues, pulling others into it.*

*There are no words sufficient for this kind of loss.*

**Ekupholeni** is a comprehensive, community-centred mental health organization that endeavours to reach individuals and communities in distress to engage them in a process of healing, recovery and empowerment. In the context of the ever-deepening HIV/AIDS pandemic, the complex interplay between mental health, HIV/AIDS, and poverty - aggravated by ongoing cycles of gender violence - drives Ekupholeni's current work.

Two of the many women who access Ekupholeni's services speak about their need for a support group:

*"I went to the bedroom. I was thinking about my grandmother. I stayed with her, she was a domestic worker. Life was difficult for me, I went to school without food, but I survived. I passed my matric and worked for other people. My mother died before I could do beautiful things for her. I was thinking positively. I became very depressed when my mother died in October 2005. I was trying to make stars, but I could not do it. I am saying my mother and my grandmother were the stars in my life."*

*"God has got it all wrong now. He is taking the young people and leaving the old ones to look after the children. It no longer makes sense."*

The Khulukela Programme, which SLF helps fund, has a support group called the Bambanani group that targets HIV+ children aged 6-12 years and their caregivers – often grandmothers. The purpose of the group has been to help assist children infected with HIV to become familiar and comfortable with their diagnosis, to adjust to living with HIV/AIDS and to be informed participants in decisions affecting their health and general

well-being. The Khulukela Programme also works to build relationships between children and caregivers, in an attempt to ensure that whatever time they have together is quality time, which will be associated with positive memories, should either one pass away. Their work with caregivers, whether they be mothers, aunts, grandmothers or unrelated foster mothers is therefore seen as an integral part of the process.

The Khulukela Programme also includes camps, retreats, healing services, family days, advocacy and research.

With support from the Stephen Lewis Foundation, Ekupholeni is:

- Operating an Adult Therapeutic Group Programme for 250 adults living with HIV/AIDS;
- Providing Individual Counseling and Support to 100 people living with HIV/AIDS and their families;
- Developing and operating a Support Programme for 50 adults in the final stages of AIDS;
- Running and developing ongoing retreats, family days and camps for HIV/AIDS sufferers including two 2-day retreats for 30 adults suffering from HIV/AIDS and 3-day camps for 35 children infected with HIV/AIDS and their caregivers, many of whom are grandmothers.

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