Investing in Girls: An Antidote to Sexual Violence and HIV & AIDS

Grassroots
Dear Friend,

As a long-time supporter of the Stephen Lewis Foundation (SLF), you will be excited to get your hands on this book and share it with others! All the royalties will be directed to grassroots organizations in Africa run by and for grandmothers and their orphaned grandchildren. Grandmothers groups and the SLF are planning over 40 book launches across Canada. Check out grandmotherspoweredbylove.com for information about the book launch nearest you, and a “sneak peek” of the book! The SLF is bringing African grandmothers from four countries to speak at many of these launches—it will be a tremendous celebration, and we hope you’ll join them!

We thought we knew what was happening in Africa when the AIDS pandemic raged across the continent, sweeping away 35 million lives, ravaging communities, burying whole families and bulldozing entire countries into economic and social chaos. But we never knew it the way this book reveals it, in the shockingly intimate and raw voices of Africa’s unsung heroes—the grandmothers—who stepped in to raise the orphaned children when no one else was left alive.

Joanna Henry and Alexis MacDonald visited grassroots organization partners of the SLF in eight African countries, interviewing and photographing hundreds of grandmothers (including Sarah Obama, Barack Obama’s grandmother, who turned out to be one of the founding matriarchs of a long-time SLF partner in Kenya!). Similar interviews were conducted across Canada. Powered by Love brings the voices of the grandmothers to you directly—telling the story of their resilience, persistence, agonies and triumphs in their own words.

These voices will leap straight into your heart. Their unguarded faces, in portraits that glow with character, pain and humour, will captivate readers. And the Canadian grandmothers who have decidedly gone global will startle and inspire you.

The unstoppable Grandmothers’ Movement is a social earthquake unnoticed—until now—by the wider world. With the publication of this book, the Canadian grandmothers will be recognized as a remarkable force for change. Hilariously irreverent, tough and ingenious, they determined to answer the challenge of their African sisters. In ten years, they’ve raised over $25 million in a completely new style of giving that overturns the old “lady bountiful” mode in favour of real sisterhood.

Here are women’s voices from both sides of the ocean: blunt, boisterous, filled with respect and love for each other. The African grandmothers, experts on what it takes to rebuild resilience and overcome the ravages of AIDS, are now mobilizing to demand their human rights. The Canadian women have undergone transformations of their own, finding new energy and meaning in the second half of their lives.

When you can dry your tears, you’ll find yourself beaming at the new world these women are creating. Guaranteed: these are women, both African and Canadian, you’ll never again dismiss as just “granny.”

Michele Landsberg
Editor, Powered by Love: A Grandmothers’ Movement to End AIDS in Africa
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Bright light streams into the large room in the spanking new schoolhouse, and eighty girls stand in their uniforms with green sweaters, and the room vibrates with anticipation.

Their faces are all at once radiant and earnest as they burst into song about the power of their girls’ club—an ode to independence and perseverance. And as soon as they finish they move purposefully into position to put on a play for one another, about vulnerability to sexual interference, the dangers of HIV and what to do about it. One girl with an impish twinkle in her eye plays the predatory uncle, slouching in her chair, lazily grabbing at a girl named Mpo playing his frightened and shy niece. The other students holler and laugh uproariously as “uncle” draws in an exaggerated male affect: “You’re such a good, pretty girl, come sit on my lap so I can show you something.” But then the laughter dies and it feels as if the air has been sucked out of the room, the trauma of so many of the girls etched on their faces, as the mock rape proceeds. It’s alluded to and not explicit, and it’s deeply unnerving to witness how quickly so many of the girls recognize their own story. What follows is the agonizing moment of revelation when her mother is told, rejection by family and peers, the isolation, and then the triumphant joining of the girls’ club—at which point everything turns around. Mpo is embraced by her club mates, is able to disclose her HIV status to them, hears from so many that she’s not alone, and even gets help from the teachers to work with the community-based organization to bring the perpetrator to justice. The catharsis is palpable.
This scene is played out at the Girls Empowerment Club at Lusoti High School supported by one of our partners—SWAGAA—but it could have been the Angelina Tembo Girls School in Zambia, or at Mavambo Trust in Zimbabwe, or at Maasai Women Development Organization (MWEDO) in Tanzania—or a whole host of other wonderful grassroots organizations that are working with orphaned and vulnerable girls through education and play therapy to reclaim their lives and instill in them the confidence to claim their rights to safety and bodily integrity.

Sexual assault and interference has long been recognized as one of the primary causes of the high levels of HIV infection among girls in sub-Saharan Africa. Our community-based partners encounter the devastating consequences of gender-based violence on a daily basis in their work. They see the profound impact it is having, spreading the reach of the pandemic in multiple ways. Infection through rape is one clear violation of girls’ rights to live free from violence. But equally pernicious and widespread is sexual coercion, which takes a myriad of damaging forms of non-consensual and unprotected sex. It can happen anywhere—in schools, in families, in workplaces, in fields, on dark morning walks to school, and when impoverished young girls engage in survival sex (sex for food, sex for school fees, etc.). Understanding this reality is central to understanding why 7,500 girls between 15 and 25 years old are infected with HIV every week, and why girls are up to five times more likely to be infected by HIV than their male counterparts.

Stephen Lewis Foundation partners are running comprehensive programmes to end violence and strengthen community commitment to girls’ rights. An essential component of these programmes is a concerted effort to bolster the knowledge, resolve, strength, economic security, and resilience of girls to advocate for their own sexual rights and autonomy. The girls at Lusoti High School that day, radiant and triumphant, so pleased with their performances and their solidarity, could see the possibility of a safer world, free from HIV and violence, emanating from their own strength and conviction.

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The SLF at Work

Where We Work

Since 2003 the Stephen Lewis Foundation (SLF) has been delivering resources directly into the hands of the grassroots organizations turning the tide of HIV & AIDS in Africa. We have partnered with 315 community-based organizations in that time, with expert grassroots leaders implementing over 1,600 inspiring and effective initiatives in the 15 countries in sub-Saharan Africa hardest hit by the AIDS pandemic.

The principles of social justice, equality and partnership guide our process. Before partnering with an organization, one of our experienced African Field Representatives (Monitoring and Evaluation Officers) visits to assess the organization’s connection to the community, its ability to implement programming and the strength of its financial accountability systems. Critically, the organizations with which we partner recognize that gender inequality drives the AIDS pandemic and have dedicated programmes that support grandmothers, girls and women. Once an organization partners with the SLF, our Programme Officers communicate regularly with its staff to ensure that our approach remains informed, responsive, relevant and effective.

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Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign

Looking for creative ways to use Powered by Love: A Grandmothers’ Movement to End AIDS in Africa with your grandmothers group? Or opportunities to share it with your friends, family and broader community? Why not incorporate a reading and reflection at the start of each group meeting? Or introduce it to your book club? You could present a copy to your mayor or local MP, or share your favourite parts with students in their classrooms. Or ask the leadership of your church, synagogue or faith community to offer reflections at services. In addition to book launch events, you can also order books in bulk at a discount to sell at marketplaces and fundraisers. Write to us at campaign@stephenlewisfoundation.org to tell us about all the ways the book has inspired you!
Financial Overview 2016–2017

Programmes
We are deeply committed to getting the majority of our revenue to the community-based organizations with which we work. Between 2003 and June 2017 the SLF disbursed and committed a cumulative $106.2 million in programme spending, including direct support to over 1,600 initiatives with 315 community-based organizations in 15 African countries. This amount represents over 83% of total expenditures over the past 14 years. To read more about our work with African partners, please visit: stephenlewisfoundation.org/what-we-do

Administration
Administration is essential to the success of every charitable organization. At the SLF these costs are associated with day-to-day operations and expenditures that ensure that we are accountable for how funds are being delivered. We are committed to keeping these administrative costs as low as possible with in-kind donations and pro bono support. We are proud to report that, again this year, our administrative costs are just under 10% of our total revenue. For more information, please visit: stephenlewisfoundation.org/who-we-are/financials

Funds Development
In order to continue to support the innovative programming developed by our African partners, the SLF has increased its fundraising capacity to engage supporters through a variety of recognizable initiatives, such as hosting special events that feature the voices and work of our partners, and encouraging critical monthly donations. This year we dedicated 9% of our revenue to support awareness-raising and fundraising, ensuring that over 80% of funds raised continued to go to programme work.

Want More Information?
For a copy of the SLF’s full audited financial statements and the link to our annual Canada Revenue Agency charity returns, please visit: stephenlewisfoundation.org/who-we-are/financials

The SLF’s fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30. Our auditors are Grant Thornton LLP Chartered Accountants. The SLF’s charitable number is 89635 4008 RR0001. If you have questions about our financial statements, please call 1-888-203-9990 ext. 244 to speak to Esther Vise, Director of Finance.
The holiday season is almost here, and our holiday tribute cards are now available!

Make your donation in lieu of a gift, and send a beautiful printed or electronic card to your family member, friend or colleague. We can send you one of our colourful tribute cards to personalize and deliver yourself, or we can mail it on your behalf. Or donate online and send an e-card for easy and immediate delivery. Strengthen the work of our grassroots partners by giving a gift that is truly meaningful!

Order your holiday cards today
stephenlewisfoundation.org/holidays