

A Communication and Style Guide for Grandmothers Groups

As members of the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign, there are plenty of opportunities to write about your group and the Campaign. Whether talking with friends, family, supporters and community members, posting on social media, or through articles and interviews with local media. We have plenty of pre-written promotional material (about the Stephen Lewis Foundation, the Grandmothers Campaign, our community-based partners, our fundraising model, etc.), which you're welcome to use in combination with your personal story and motivation for being part of the Campaign.

It's important that every time anyone connected with the SLF discusses and shares about the Campaign, they are doing so thinking first and foremost of our community-based partner organizations and the African grandmothers we support, portraying them with respect and dignity. To support you and answer some commonly asked questions, we've developed this communications and style guide to help address the big ideas, and the more nuanced wording choices, and explain why we work the way we do.

Key Messages and Information about the Stephen Lewis Foundation:

When speaking to those who aren't familiar with the SLF and Grandmothers Campaign, it's helpful to provide a big-picture overview about how we work and the scope of our support. This information can always be found in the most recent Grassroots newsletter, Year in Review, and our website. For example:

*The Stephen Lewis Foundation works with community-based organizations who are turning the tide of HIV and AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa. Since 2003, the SLF has partnered with 325 community-based organizations on more than 1,800 initiatives in the 15 countries that have been hardest hit by the AIDS pandemic.**

*The Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign was launched in response to the crisis faced by African grandmothers as they struggled to care for millions of children orphaned by AIDS. Since 2006, more than \$36 million has been raised.**

*Note that these numbers are accurate as of March 2020 and are updated annually.

General Principle:

Solidarity, not charity – Wherever possible, the Foundation uses the language of 'solidarity' rather than 'charity' to refer to the kind of support the SLF extends to partner organizations and the work of grandmothers groups. This is absolutely integral to our work. This is because we are firmly rooted in the principle that our partners are the experts in their communities and the work that they do. The SLF exists to amplify their voices and support their efforts, not to step in to do the work for them.

Language Specifics:

Here are some common terms and phrases you might use in your work, and information about how we choose to phrase them.

'Children orphaned by AIDS' – When talking about children who have lost parents to the AIDS pandemic, the SLF uses the term 'children orphaned by AIDS'. This expression does not stigmatize children or assume they themselves are HIV-positive, which is not always true. Identifying a human being by his or

her social condition alone shows a lack of respect for the individual, in the same way as identifying a human being by his or her medical condition first does not centre the person, but centres their status. As many people who are living with HIV declare, 'HIV does not define me'.

HIV & AIDS – The Foundation prefers HIV & AIDS to HIV/AIDS because of the important differences between the two. The expression HIV/AIDS can cause confusion that everyone with HIV also has AIDS, which is not the case. Most people with HIV do not have AIDS. Instead use an ampersand or the word 'and' with spaces (i.e. avoid HIV&AIDS). Also note that when writing AIDS, all letters are capitalized as it is an acronym for Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome.

Pandemic – The SLF refers to the AIDS *pandemic*. The terminology of an *epidemic*, favoured by most major international AIDS organizations, has been used briefly in the past. However, the decision has been made to use *pandemic* exclusively, because it is truly a global issue.

Sub-Saharan Africa – The 15 countries where the Foundation partners should be described as located within sub-Saharan Africa (as opposed to "Africa," "Southern Africa," "third world" or "developing world", etc.).

'The SLF' – Where the Foundation is referred to using its acronym, it should be accompanied by 'the.'

SLF Partners – It is important to make clear the SLF itself does not work directly in Africa. We are a funding organization which supports the work of many community-based organizations. This is essential because they are the experts in their communities, not the SLF. We also use the word 'partner' as opposed to 'beneficiaries' as our partners are not passive entities, the SLF takes organizational direction and manages our priorities through guidance from our partners.

Other Style Considerations:

Photography – The Foundation chooses the photos used in print publications with great care and deliberation. More recently, we have favoured a documentarian or photo-journalistic look that honours and respects the dignity and intelligence of the person(s) being photographed. We avoid any images that might make photo subjects appear undignified, powerless or as 'recipients' of 'charity.' Neither text nor logo should ever be placed on top of a person's face in photos.

Photo credits – The SLF credits photographers in every possible instance that their images are used in print publications and online. The credit will either appear on or alongside the image. If the image is used on a promotional item such as a postcard, the credit may appear on the reverse. If the image is used on Facebook, the photographer will be credited in the photo description. If the image is used on Twitter, the SLF will endeavor to have a photo credit appear on the image.

Please be in touch with the Grandmothers Campaign team if you need images to accompany promotional material, or to use on your website and we can help source appropriate images and make sure you have the information needed to credit photographers.

Communicating our Message through Presentations

As members of the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign you will undoubtedly be tasked with sharing news and information from the SLF at your events.

Sharing the experiences and work of grandmothers and community-based organizations is an important element of building awareness about the grassroots responses to the AIDS pandemic while also raising funds to support this work.

We understand your desire to share information in the most engaging and compelling way, and there are important factors to consider to be sure we're consistently amplifying the voices of our partners, grandmothers and their communities, not speaking for them.

Amplifying voices is a way to demonstrate solidarity, and support the work and initiatives they lead.

SLF publications, including Grassroots newsletters and Year in Reviews, PowerPoint presentations and videos, provide examples of the work our partner organizations lead in communities across sub-Saharan Africa. These resources share the experiences and expertise of our partners in their own voices. They can be used as speaking notes for presentations, or issues to discuss as educational components in meetings.

In addition to language considerations, the way in which the experiences of our partners and their community members are shared is equally important. The simplest way to ensure you are honouring our partners and African grandmothers who have chosen to share their stories, is by reading them directly as they have been shared, word for word, without altering or adding additional details that haven't been verified by the individuals themselves. When reading these stories during a presentation, it's best to share with the audience the name of the individual whose story and experience you will read, any details you have about that individual (nationality, age, etc.) and then tell your audience that you're reading the story as it was told to the Stephen Lewis Foundation.

Most importantly, we're here to help you. If you'd like to discuss ideas, need additional information, or have any concerns about material you've seen on our website or in the name of the Grandmothers Campaign or the SLF, please contact us at campaign@stephenlewisfoundation.org or 416-533-9292, or toll free at 1-888-203-9990 ext. 0.