



2020 Impact Report



the Stephen Lewis
FOUNDATION

Dear Grandmothers and Grandothers,

Words alone cannot express the depth of our gratitude for your steadfast support in 2020. It has always been our aspiration to do more – to enable the community-based organizations with which we work, to touch more lives in a meaningful way. Because of you, we've been able to work steadily towards achieving just that.

If you had asked us to imagine a year in which our partners, who are already doing so much on the frontlines to address the HIV and AIDS pandemic, would be forced to pivot to address new and emerging needs in their communities thanks to COVID-19, we would have painted a picture of hope, resilience and courage. This is what these organizations have always embodied even when facing insurmountable odds, and we would have told you to expect nothing less.

But in even our most hopeful scenarios, we wouldn't have adequately captured the truly remarkable impact our grassroots partners have had this past year. They have worked tirelessly to get HIV medications to rural communities during lockdowns, delivered emergency food assistance to children and their caregivers who have lost their livelihoods, innovated ways to offer mental health support virtually, and expanded programming to prevent and respond to gender-based violence, to name a few.

We are honoured to provide you with this report, highlighting their tangible impact and how your contributions are driving change on the frontlines.

Thank you for all that you do,



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DELIVERING HEALTHCARE TO PEOPLE AFFECTED BY HIV AND AIDS

Restrictions on movement since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic have caused transportation costs to skyrocket, cutting off many people living with HIV from the urban health centres where they access their essential medication. Community-based organizations have stepped in to bridge this gap in care, getting anti-retroviral medications from urban areas to the communities that need them.

At the same time, our partners have gone above and beyond by taking on the additional responsibility of translating and distributing coronavirus prevention information in accessible formats to members of the community while setting up community handwashing stations, making and distributing masks, and providing access to soap and sanitizer for grandmothers and people living with HIV. This system of home-based, localized care is providing an invaluable alternative and complement to centralized government facilities.

Though our partners are continuing to innovate, with no end to the COVID-19 pandemic in sight, the need remains great. We are grateful to have your support so that we can continue to fulfill our promise to our partners and those who rely on them.

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“We have managed to incorporate COVID-19 education in most of our public health education. We have managed to **provide soap, gloves, and face masks to the most vulnerable groups** around the villages such as community health workers, people living with HIV/AIDS, the elders, and to the primary schools. **Over 2000 people have benefited** from such services.”

– Maasai Women Development Organization (MWEDO), Tanzania



Field Nurses (above), Field Assistants (below), and volunteers are vital parts of the team at Reach One Touch One Ministries (ROTOM) in Uganda. They are ensuring that people living with and affected by HIV have access to medication, care, and food.



CHAMPIONING HEALTH AND HUMAN RIGHTS FOR LGBTIQ COMMUNITIES

The COVID-19 pandemic has heightened the level of violence and discrimination LGBTIQ communities face. LGBTIQ communities are being blamed for coronavirus by religious communities who claim it is “God’s punishment for homosexuality”; LGBTIQ people who are isolated in transphobic and homophobic families and communities face emotional and physical harm; and lockdowns and social distancing policies have interrupted access to food, important psychosocial supports, and HIV medications.

Thanks to you, we supported our LGBTIQ partners to reach 40,000 people last year, an increase of 30% over the year before. As we celebrate our partners’ impact, we know that there is still so much



urgent work to be done for LGBTIQ health and human rights. That is why last year we launched our Partners in Pride campaign to raise \$3 million over 3 years to fully scale-up support for our current LGBTIQ partners and to extend support to other LGBTIQ organizations across the region to reach 100,000 people per year.



Photo provided by Rainbow Sunrise Mapambazuko

During the first 5 months of the pandemic, Rainbow Sunrise Mapambazuko in Democratic Republic of the Congo distributed food staples to 50 LGBTIQ people living with HIV, and hand sanitizer and masks to 100 more LGBTIQ community members.

Our LGBTIQ partner organizations have responded swiftly to their communities’ needs. They have:



provided safe **emergency shelter** to LGBTIQ community members who were driven from their homes



established **hotlines** for reporting violence and abuse



increased the availability of **HIV self-testing kits**



distributed three month **supplies of HIV medications** to people living with HIV



mobilized their **peer support networks** to provide phone-based psychosocial support



provided **food staples** to HIV-positive community members whose livelihoods have been impacted by lockdowns



secured motorbike transportation and personal protective equipment for staff **distributing food and medical packages**

SUPPORTING GRANDMOTHERS TO THRIVE IN THE FACE OF HIV AND COVID-19

Economic instability, program disruptions, and the shutdown of marketplaces, are only a few of the challenges that have exacerbated food insecurity for grandmothers and the children in their care since COVID-19.

Recognizing the vulnerability of grandmothers to COVID-19 due to their advancing age, and the significant risk of extreme hunger for grandmother-headed households, community-based organizations (CBOs) have adapted their work to support the immediate survival of grandmothers and the children in their care. They have distributed emergency food parcels, trained grandmothers in raising indigenous crops, increased home-based care visits, and provided emotional support to grandmothers and their grandchildren. At the same time, CBOs have continued to provide support to thousands of additional grandmothers through peer support groups, providing COVID-19 prevention education as well as training to shift to income-generating activities that are profitable during the pandemic.

157,000+



We support our community-based partners to **reach more than 35,000 grandmothers and the more than 122,000 children in their care** with support groups and income-generating activities every year.

Like many organizations, Hillcrest AIDS Centre Trust in South Africa has distributed food hampers to hundreds of households in response to the food insecurity caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. With a view towards longer term sustainability, they have also encouraged home gardens and provided vegetable seedlings grown in their nursery to grandmother-headed households.



Photo provided by HACT

Fifteen years ago, we launched the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign as an international solidarity movement of grandmothers in Canada (and now internationally) who raise awareness and funds through their volunteer grandmothers groups to support grandmothers in sub-Saharan Africa. Since 2006, the Campaign has raised more than \$40 million. As we mark the Grandmothers Campaign's 15th Anniversary, we celebrate the tremendous strides that African grandmothers have made individually and collectively. It is their strength, wisdom, and courage that will lead their communities through the HIV and AIDS and COVID-19 pandemics.



MEETING THE CHANGING NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

In many of the countries where our partners work, schools were shut down for some period of time, leaving children without the structure, peer support, guidance, and, often, meals that come with attending school. The fear and anxiety related to COVID-19 have affected the mental health and wellbeing of these children, with many of them facing extreme hunger due to the pandemic's impacts on their caregivers' livelihoods – a burden that no child should ever have to bear.

Our community-based partners have continued programming for children and youth in compliance with COVID-19 restrictions. They have provided school materials, arts and craft activities, and books for children during school closures. They have modified outreach programs to reach the girls and young women at greatest risk of experiencing gender-based violence, facing unplanned pregnancies, or falling behind in their education. They have identified the children and households most at risk of food insecurity and provided nutrition and gardening support. And they have found innovative, COVID-aware ways to support the psychosocial wellbeing of young people.

Our partners are doing exceptional work to mitigate the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on children and youth in their communities. We will continue to stand with them as they support children and young people to remain HIV negative or maintain treatment into adulthood, stay in school, see themselves as part of the solution, participate as active members of resilient families and communities, and have a sense of agency about their futures.



Photo provided by Nyaka

Schools in Uganda were closed from March 2020 until February 2021 due to COVID-19. Nyaka AIDS Orphans Project mitigated the impact of these disruptions and helped children continue their learning by distributing study packages every two weeks once lockdown restrictions were eased in June 2020.



The SLF supports LVCT Health in Kenya to increase access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) services for young people with disabilities who are often missed by mainstream programming. Over the last year, LVCT Health has provided **SRHR education and HIV testing to 265 adolescents and young people with disabilities**, eleven of whom tested positive for HIV. LVCT Health is proud to report that they supported all 11 to initiate anti-retroviral treatment and will continue to support them to adhere to treatment.

LVCT Health's success in reaching diverse communities is reflective of a trend across our partner organizations. SLF partners report a **93% HIV treatment adherence rate**, which is well above the regional average.



PREVENTING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND SUPPORTING SURVIVORS

The 2020 World AIDS Day report from UNAIDS (the United Nations' HIV and AIDS organization), confirmed what grassroots organizations have been reporting for months: "COVID-19 is worsening gender inequalities and gender-based violence, which in turn increase the vulnerability of women and girls to HIV." As UNAIDS reported, "Since the beginning of the pandemic, UN Women has documented increases in domestic violence in diverse countries and regions, with especially notable spikes occurring when stay-at-home orders have been in place. In Kenya, for instance, monthly country reporting to UNAIDS shows that the number of people seeking services after experiencing sexual and/or gender-based violence has increased steadily since April 2020."

Our community-based partners have realigned budgets, changed programming, and worked determinedly to ensure that they can keep shelters and vital community organizations safely open throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. They have set up text messaging services and hotlines for people to report violence or access support without having to meet in person. And they have employed social workers, trained volunteers, and mobilized community networks to educate men and women about women's rights.

Community-based organizations in sub-Saharan Africa are making significant headway to support survivors in the face of devastating gender-based violence and to address the seemingly intractable attitudes that contribute to it. Together, we must ensure those organizations have the funds and support they need.



Musasa, an SLF partner in Zimbabwe, is responding to a rapid increase in gender-based violence (GBV) during the COVID-19 pandemic. Over a 6-month period, they provided shelter and food to 342 survivors of GBV. They are also mobilizing to raise awareness about GBV and to engage community members in preventing it.

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"At RISE, we have worked to **address violence against women and girls** in a number of ways. We have increased male involvement through our "Men Engage Advocates" who **provide education to men and boys on women's rights**; strengthened community-based policing forums that **enforce laws at community levels**; continued **strengthening Women's Rights Protection Committees** in 5 villages; worked with chiefs and other community leaders on by-laws to guide community courts in cases of violence; and strengthened child protection committees in several communities."

– Rights Institute for Social Empowerment (RISE), Malawi

THRIVING IN THE YEAR AHEAD

These stories are only a small glimpse into the impact our 130 community-based partners are having. They have been faced with unprecedented challenges, and they have risen to the challenge. But the scope and breadth of the work that still needs to be done is tremendous. UNAIDS estimates that by 2022, we could see an additional 293,000 HIV infections and an additional 148,000 AIDS-related deaths because of the effects of COVID-19 on communities and programs. We need your continued support to invest in the organizations that are best positioned to mitigate this.

As we have demonstrated throughout this report, our partners will continue to push forward to overcome these obstacles. **We know that our partners' work has been effective.** We know these numbers would be much worse if not for grassroots organizations implementing innovative, community-focused, human rights programming. We know the support you have provided has helped lay the foundation for the progress that has already been made.

We hope that you will continue to accompany us on this journey. There is too much at stake to despair. Let's support the organizations best positioned to make concrete, long-lasting change in their communities. **Let's invest in hope.**

Photo provided by ROTOM



"Thanks to ROTOM, I am aware of what to do even during this terror of COVID -19, and my grandson has been supported to acquire an education. ... I am now more hopeful and I believe that I am living a dignified and fulfilled life."

– Edridah, Uganda

As our partners look at the year ahead, they tell us that they need:

Flexibility so they can adapt to future lockdowns and respond to changing community needs	
Funding for their core organizational costs such as staffing and rent	
Continued investment in HIV & AIDS programming	
Mental health support for staff who are experiencing overwork, burnout, and stress	
Access to COVID-19 vaccines	
Masks, hand sanitizer, and other personal protective equipment	
Emergency grants for food parcels for grandmothers, children, and people living with HIV	
Increased support to address the disproportionate impacts of lockdowns on women and girls including increases in teenage pregnancy, child marriage, and gender-based violence	



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Turning the Tide of HIV & AIDS in Africa
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