

TANZANIA GRANDMOTHERS STATEMENT

GRANDMOTHERS ARE THE PILLARS OF OUR NATION. Since HIV and AIDS came to Tanzania, we have been raising our children's children – a generation of young people left parentless by the pandemic. We knew we had to keep these orphans close and show them love. HIV and AIDS is still a major threat to our country, but Tanzania endures, because we grandmothers have endured.

We are making history. For the first time in Tanzania, over 200 grandmothers from across the country have gathered together in Arusha to connect, learn from one another and to form a vision of the future that we want to see for our families and communities. Our movement is growing and we are not alone – we were joined here by grandmothers from Uganda and South Africa. There is great solidarity. We know that we must all use our voices. Africa's grandmothers are rising up.

We love our grandchildren from our hearts, and we have done a lot. But we are over-burdened. A single grandmother raising 4 to 6 to 10 grandchildren on her own pays a heavy price. Our small incomes can't support our families. We struggle to feed the children and keep them in school. Healthcare is out of reach. Our rights to our own land are constantly under threat. We face the stigma of HIV and AIDS, and as we get older our lives are valued less and less. We are speaking out now because we know that if we hide these truths, the problems will never end.

Grandmothers stand with the orphans, but who stands for us? We must not be left alone to raise the next generation. Our NGOs and community-based organizations have brought us together, and all too often they are our only allies. These orphaned children are society's future leaders, they belong to all of us, and we must all be responsible.

We call upon our beloved nation of Tanzania to protect our rights and care for us grandmothers. We acknowledge the existence of well-intentioned policies and programmes such as TASAF (Tanzania Social Action Fund), but they are not reaching us.

We call specifically, and with the greatest urgency for:

- Pensions for the elderly
- Supportive terms for personal and business loans
- Grants for vulnerable grandchildren and assistance with school costs and higher education
- Guaranteed provision of free medical services and medication to the elderly
- Protection of our land and property rights
- Protection from violence and discrimination based on age and disability
- Representation of grandmothers at all levels of government, including creating national and local grandmothers' committees
- Data collection on grandmothers at both local and national levels
- A national day for Tanzania's grandmothers
- Budget allocation from all levels of government for grandmothers

We also call on the international community to respect grandmothers and provide Tanzania with the support it needs to advance our cause. Grandmothers from around the world – including from Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States – have joined us in solidarity. We are asking their governments and agencies to step up and do the same.

Tanzania: Protect us, listen to us, and give us opportunities. We are not asking for favours. We are speaking out for our human rights and wellbeing. Grandmothers are the reflection of our nation. When we are well taken care of, the entire society will flourish.

Bibi Ni Nguzo!

GRANDMOTHERS GATHERING, ARUSHA, TANZANIA
FEBRUARY 26 – MARCH 1, 2018

