

UGANDAN GRANDMOTHERS STATEMENT

WE, 500 GRANDMOTHERS FROM EVERY REGION in Uganda, have come together for three days in Entebbe for the first ever National Grandmothers Gathering. We are celebrating our triumphs over the devastation that HIV and AIDS has wrought: over the painful losses of our loved ones, over stigma and discrimination, and over the threat to our very survival. Our love and labour has sown the seeds of new hope for our grandchildren, our families and our communities.

Our journey has been a long one, but our strength has been growing. We joined with other grandmothers in Toronto in 2006 breaking through silence and stigma. In Swaziland in 2010, we looked toward the future. Now, united in Uganda, we are claiming that future.

We have done our part. We care for the sick, we work the land, we hold our collective memory, and fueled by our love we raise the next generations, provide food, schooling, homes and security.

For far too long we have not been counted, we have not been valued, we have been made invisible. It is time for our contributions to be recognized and our rights to be protected.

Health care services must respond to the needs and realities of grandmothers and the children in their care, including: accessible grandmother-friendly HIV related services, specialized clinics and mobile care.

We must be protected from land grabbing and our property and inheritance rights guaranteed—not just on paper but in reality.

We demand an end to violence against grandmothers, whether it is domestic violence, elder abuse, or rape.

We are productive members of our society, and every government programme and policy should be designed with us in mind. But that is not enough, concrete action must be taken to ensure we can access them.

Our efforts to secure livelihoods for our families must be supported. Economic opportunities should be expanded for those of us still able to work, and social benefits extended to those who cannot. Protection from theft is essential, as well as greater access to credit and markets.

We are raising generations of grandchildren ruptured by trauma, and require financial assistance and psychosocial support.

While we welcome the commitment to move the provision of social pensions from 15 to 40 districts, we urge our government to reach all of the grandmothers of our nation as soon as possible.

To our government, the private sector, civil society, media, UN Agencies and members of the international community—the grandmothers of Uganda have a powerful vision for a future in which our families and communities are thriving, and have left the ravages of AIDS behind. With the support of our community based organizations we have made huge strides, and we know a vibrant future is possible, but we cannot do it alone. To our Canadian sisters in the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign, you are an important part of our story, and we feel your solidarity as we build momentum.

We are 500 grandmothers here today, but we represent millions more. We are not young, but we are strong. We want the world to know how much we have achieved and how much we have overcome. We have breath to sing and energy to dance. We are moving forward! Join us!

GRANDMOTHERS' GATHERING, ENTEBBE, UGANDA
OCTOBER 5-7, 2015



the Stephen Lewis
FOUNDATION

