

SPOTLIGHT ON

# GRASSROOTS

SPRING 2010



## AFRICAN INSTITUTE: UNITED AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

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**T**he African Institute on Gender-Based Violence, HIV/AIDS and Counselling emanates from a *cri de coeur*. Across the continent, countless women, who have been raped and abused, are determined to survive despite the egregious wrongs they have sustained to their bodies and psyches, compounded by the increased exposure to HIV infection. These women come together in villages, clinics and hospitals to fight back and move beyond the horror, refusing to relinquish hope for their own lives and that of their families.

One extraordinarily powerful response to gender-based violence and AIDS is the creation, by frontline activists and counsellors, of the African Institute. Imagine a dynamic, mobile, expert response team for women, by women – at the ready – wanting to assist other women and organisations in Africa, mobilised in teams, armed with expertise in counselling, and trained to teach frontline workers, counsellors, nurses and doctors.

There has never been an organisation or institution like this in Africa and the women who do this kind of work, day in and day out, have sent out a clarion call for an

Institute to come alive. They envisage a creative, active and pro-active centre of thinking, working, rejuvenation and sharing of strategies and effective interventions. The women talk about the need for somewhere to go and relax, write, share ideas and receive and provide training.

The Institute will be such a place. A beacon of practical and thoughtful learning and powerful responses to the scourge of gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS. The women calling for the Institute are not satisfied with survival... they are determined to overcome the pandemic of violence and AIDS and restore sanity, respect, security and vibrancy to the lives of women across the continent. The Foundation is equally determined to be with them every step of the way.

The Stephen Lewis Foundation is proud to stand in solidarity with the remarkable women who are fiercely determined to make the inspirational vision of the African Institute a reality. We're excited to fund this ground-breaking initiative. We know you will be too.



the Stephen Lewis  
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# MESSAGE FROM ILANA LANDSBERG-LEWIS



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**"Everything we can do to support the women who heal those who have been hurt, and to strengthen women to resist the violence, is a victory."**

It's so easy – almost tempting – to despair when we think about sexual violence: the hurt, the harm, the hopelessness of ending the aggression once and for all. This is not a uniquely African horror. There is no town or city in Canada where a woman has not been raped; there is no place where children have never been violated by adults who are supposed to care for them.

We are not being superior, therefore, when we dwell on the tragedy of violence against African women. We focus our attention there because, to an unusual degree, the rapes that occur as a strategy of war, as well as those sadly, everyday violations of individual girls and women, are a vector for the deadly disease of AIDS.

Along with the courageous and indomitable African women – who are training as counsellors, organising survivor groups, repairing the

broken bodies and fractured psyches of women who have been raped and tortured, facilitating income generation projects to offer women a way out of economic dependency in violent situations – we lean our shoulders to the wheel. Everything we can do to support the women who heal those who have been hurt, and to strengthen women to resist the violence, is a victory.

We intend, with your help, to multiply those victories into a tidal wave of resistance to violence and its aftermath. The projects supported by the Foundation working on sexual violence and HIV and AIDS exemplify the African adage: When you strike the women, you have struck a rock.

Ilana Landsberg-Lewis  
Executive Director

 **We'd like to introduce you to our new publication *Spotlight on Grassroots***

It's a snapshot of some of the crucial action you are supporting at the grassroots level in Africa, plus news about our exciting campaigns to engage Canadians. We feel it's tremendously important to keep you informed so that the people you are supporting can be part of your lives.

We also hope to inspire you to continue your support. It's critical that we find ways to do this as cost-effectively as possible and we hope, therefore, that you will appreciate this new newsletter-in-brief. Our full newsletter, *Grassroots*, will return each fall.

# MENDING BODIES, HEALING LIVES

**C**an small, grassroots organisations really make a lasting difference in the lives of women and have an impact on the AIDS pandemic itself?

Community-based projects are working with almost desperate determination to meet the needs of women who are living in untenable situations of violence and therefore increased vulnerability to HIV.

Take Musasa, for example. Despite political turmoil and hyperinflation in Zimbabwe, the Musasa project has managed to increase its support for women.

Women who have been subjected to violence are often unable to return home for fear of reprimand, shame or blame. They need shelter and Musasa provides it. As women strive to reclaim their lives, self-esteem, hope and security, Musasa provides vital counselling. For women who want to pursue legal redress, Musasa ensures they have supportive legal assistance. These and other vital support services contribute directly to the long-term health and independence of these women confronting the gender inequality that makes them more vulnerable to HIV.

Cecilia is one of those women: "My husband was not peaceful. He used to beat me. He would take my pay and put the money in his bank account. He slept with another woman and then I got HIV. Musasa gave me shelter and legal help and I divorced. I got some property (from the settlement). I am hoping to make it on my own now, with economic improvement from Musasa."



*Dr. Mukwege and survivors of sexual violence at Panzi Hospital, DRC*

© Paula Allen

The dedicated workers of the Musasa project go even further, using their expertise to advocate with those who have the power to influence communities and local and national policies. They have been remarkably successful in getting constructive participation from the police, the judiciary, community leaders, young people and men willing to become mentors to other men. They host radio programmes and hold monthly educational talks to encourage women to speak out about human rights.

And then there's the remarkable Panzi Hospital in the Democratic Republic of Congo. In the face of blatant acts of sexual violence as a strategy of war in the Congo, Panzi

Hospital rebuilds women's broken bodies and provides free medical care, accommodation, food and support to survivors. Panzi treats as many as 4,000 women survivors of rape and mutilation a year.

This year, Panzi is launching an ambitious project to provide economic and counselling support to a thousand women and girls – all survivors of sexual violence – most now living with HIV. They will work together in groups based on their skills and interests, such as poultry rearing, sewing or catering, to support one another and generate income. Panzi's dedication to the women it supports is immeasurable. Its ground-breaking work is simply heroic.

**We learn so much from the inspiring leadership and courage of those engaged at the grassroots working to turn the tide of AIDS in Africa. As members of the global community, let's take our cues from these determined African community leaders who are doing the extraordinary each and every day.**

**As a supporter of the Stephen Lewis Foundation, you help sustain the vital work being done on the ground by Africa's heroic women. Thank you!**



## STRIDE TO TURN THE TIDE: A NATIONAL WALK

On **June 12th and 13th 2010**, grandmothers from the Stephen Lewis Foundation's Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign will be walking in support of African grandmothers who are caring for children orphaned by AIDS. The Stride to Turn the Tide will take place in communities across Canada and anyone can participate.

### JOIN THE GRANDMOTHERS WALKING NEAR YOU!

Please contact: **Pam Farron** at [pfarron3@telus.net](mailto:pfarron3@telus.net).  
To donate, visit: [www.grandmotherscampaign.org](http://www.grandmotherscampaign.org).

## ➔ JOIN OR START A GRANNY GROUP

### It's easy and wonderful!

Grandmother groups are at the heart of the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign. To learn more about joining a group or starting your own group, please contact [campaign@stephenlewisfoundation.org](mailto:campaign@stephenlewisfoundation.org) or call 1-888-203-9990 ext. 230.



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## TAKE ACTION

- Donate online, over the phone or by sending a cheque to the address below.
- Become a monthly donor through pre-authorized payments on your credit card or through your bank account.
- Leave a legacy in your will, listing the Foundation as a beneficiary of your RRSP/RRIF or life insurance or by leaving a bequest of assets.

*To learn more, please visit our website or call us at 1-888-203-9990. We'd be delighted to hear from you!*

## TRIBUTE CARDS FOR GRADUATION

**Make a donation in honour of a graduate.** Give a gift online by visiting [www.stephenlewisfoundation.org](http://www.stephenlewisfoundation.org) and send a personalized e-card with your own message or call 1-888-203-9990 ext. 0 to send a printed card.



## REGISTER NOW!

Returning this fall, A Dare to Remember is the exciting annual campaign of the

Stephen Lewis Foundation. We're daring Canadians to raise funds for the inspiring transformation in sub-Saharan Africa, where community-based organisations are working to turn the tide of AIDS.

Remember and honour the Africans who rise to meet the challenges of the pandemic with extraordinary acts of courage, ingenuity, determination and the strength of their communities.

Dare yourself and others to take part with a powerful act of solidarity! Whether learning to swim or painting a mural, running a marathon or organising a group dinner, do what you dare to raise funds, mobilise your community and help turn the tide of AIDS in Africa.

Find out more and register your Dare today!  
**Visit [www.adaretoremember.com](http://www.adaretoremember.com).**



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