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POST-GATHERING UPDATES

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UPDATES FROM AFRICA

In Africa, much networking and organizing has begun and is being continued. We continue to hear from groups all over Africa, including some who attended the Gathering and others who did not. They are all expanding or beginning programming around support to grandmothers. Here are just three fascinating developments that illustrate the power of the experience at the Gathering, and the opportunities for further mobilization and solidarity-building. Each is garnering support for the unsung heroes of Africa: the grannies.

1) In **South Africa**, GAPA (Grandmothers Against Poverty and AIDS) is planning an exchange with SWAPOL (Swaziland Positive Living for Life) in Swaziland. They will meet with the members of SWAPOL (which was represented at the Gathering), in order to continue the conversation started in GAPA's workshop about how to replicate successful models in other countries and contexts. This is an exciting development initiated of their own accord and facilitated by the groups themselves.

Please see p.89 of the Supporting Documents section for GAPA's paper on their genesis, model and successes.

2) In November 2006, several **Kenyan** groups that attended the Gathering (PDI WOSP, KWOSP, WOFAK, TAPWAK and MORCAO) held a joint meeting to form the Network of Grandmothers Caring for AIDS Orphans (NGAO). They have agreed that every province in Kenya will have an organization that is a focal point for the network, and they are moving to have their group officially set up as an NGO in Kenya!

3) The Chiedza Child Care Centre (CCCC) in **Zimbabwe** assists orphans and other vulnerable children and caregivers affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The CCCC runs after-school programmes, nursery schools, women's support groups, wage-earning activities, community gardening and training for community caregivers. They provide support to grandmothers working to care for their grandchildren and other loved ones affected by the pandemic. SLF recently received an update from Stella Masikano, Executive Director of the Chiedza Child Care Centre. What follows is a story like hundreds of others, but we want to share it with you in detail as an example of how the impact of the Gathering continues to play out in the work of the Foundation:

One of the Grannies was locked up in prison to serve 90 days for failing to vacate her late mother's house where she and her husband were caring for an orphan left by her late sister. Her husband was terminally ill. We got to know about all this through the ill husband who was asking us as an organization to take this orphan to our centre. As you know we are a community-based organization, although we have few buildings, we encourage children to stay within the community.

We visited the sick husband as a team from the centre and, hey, the man was in so much pain, without food and nobody to really care for him since the wife is in prison.

When we left the house, which is 20 kilometres from where the family used to live, and this is in a different town from Harare, we thought of alternatives to keep the child in school. The child had missed lessons for a whole week because he could not afford bus fare. We then visited the Grannie in Prison and asked if she was comfortable with the idea of having the orphan placed with Grannie Dorcas who attended the workshop in Toronto, she agreed happily. We were not sure if Grannie Dorcas would accommodate this extra child as she already has 23 people in her household, but because of her outgoing personality and kind heart, we thought we should give it a try. It was only one word and she accepted. This was the best place for the child to be because its in the same neighborhood and the child is friends with some of the children within the household already. When Grannie Dorcas accepted this request, I couldn't hold back my tears. Meanwhile the husband of this granny in prison got worse. We went and removed the child from that household and the child resumed lessons at school. Most importantly, he has settled down very well.

Sadly, the sick husband passed away on Wednesday 27 September 2006. Since there is a problem of fuel shortage we could not attend the funeral but we only managed to provide bus fare for Brian, the 13 year old orphan. He has since gone back to Grannie Dorcas. The Grannie in prison could not even attend her husband's funeral. She herself looks ill.

What it means is that we are going to have additional children to look after.
I thought I should share this with you.

kindest Regards
Stella

The SLF wrote back to Stella, asking her to let us know what kind of funds the grannies need to get them through this hard time, as a group and as individuals.
Stella wrote back:

Hi Ilana

Many thanks for your email. I feel so much relieved to know that other people care. Thank you so much Ilana. Just hearing from you has made such a big difference. Yesterday I went to the prison to visit Mary Makoni as we had not seen her since the husband died. She only knew about the husband's death three days after the burial. I went with two of my staff members and it was such a moving occasion to all of us. The reason why we also wanted to see her was to prepare her for the future: to find out what she was going to do after serving the sentence, what her plans are for the children and where she would go upon release. She asked me to ask Grandmother Dorcas to look for a two roomed accommodation so that she can reunite with her two children and Brian.

Definitely she would need the basics like accommodation, food and toiletries.

Granny Dorcas was even prepared to let Brian stay until end of next year when he completes his O Levels.

NOTE FROM SLF:

As a result of this correspondence, Chiedza is putting together a proposal to address the needs of grandmothers in their community. Granny Mary Makoni has been

released from prison and united with Brian at the Chiedza Centre. She is staying with a distant cousin, and as part of the Chiedza 'granny project,' she will be funded by the SLF to help her put her life and her family back together with adequate resources and shelter.

Dr. Stella writes: *When Granny Mary Makoni met with Brian at Chiedza Centre, it was a moving ceremony as the two embraced each other. Granny Makoni spent the whole afternoon with us and the other grannies that had come to the usual support group meeting and to welcome her. She started unwinding and there was visible shakiness in her speech until much later in the day when she realized that she had been accepted back in society.*



UPDATES FROM CANADA

Since the Grandmothers' Gathering in August, another 90 grandmothers' groups have formed across the country — bringing the total number of groups raising awareness and funds for African grannies to over 140, and there are more in the works!

There have been so many innovative and committed activities to raise awareness and funds — those below are just a small sample. In 2006, the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign raised over \$600,000!

GRANDPARENTS DAY ON PARLIAMENT HILL

Patti Koeslag of Grands & Friends in Ottawa, Ontario

On September 10, 2006, grandmothers' groups from Ottawa and the surrounding area marched together on Parliament Hill — the seat of Canada's federal government — to raise awareness of the costs of HIV and AIDS for grandmothers in Africa. They plan to make the march an annual event!

Here are their plans for next year's Grandparents' Day March:

October 21st email:

Sep. 9, 2007 (Grandparents Day) will be our second annual march on Parliament Hill on behalf of the Grandmothers of Africa. All the Ottawa groups and some outlying groups will be participating in the organization of this. We will be putting out press releases and have some very capable lobbyists and public relations people on our team. We have a multi-group planning meeting scheduled for early in the new year.

We have been in touch with some African vocal groups (Voices of Africa, USA) and would like to set up a Saturday evening engagement with speaking and entertainment and a Sunday march and speeches on Parliament Hill.

We are thrilled to tell you we made \$900 on our yard sale and then we received another cheque for \$1,000!!! As well, the Green Door Restaurant is looking at Nov. 27 for a dinner fundraiser... I think all the groups in the area are going to get together on this...all monies go to SLF.



INSPIRATIONAL BENEFIT CONCERT

Barbara Sivorot of Creston Gogo Grannies in Creston, British Columbia

October 24th email:

The first annual Benefit Concert held by the Creston GoGo Grannies was held at the Prince Charles Auditorium on September 30th. It was a huge success, raising over \$1600.00 for the Stephen Lewis Foundation (less a little for expenses!). We had 12 entertainers, who volunteered to assist us. We had mostly singers, but also had a wonderful piano player, Monte Anderson, accompanied by his daughter, Sarah Anderson, playing a fiddle and Karl Sommerfelt, also on the fiddle. Also a group called Wild Mountain Thyme from Bonnersferry in the U.S.A. who sang their hearts out. It was a wonderful evening and I wish you could all have been there. At the beginning our President, Ingrid Voigt, gave a opening speech on who we were, our cause and it went over very well. We even dressed the part, and had the most unique African gowns to wear. Donated to us by one of our members who is from Africa. We also sold many of our items that help us raise money, tote bags with our GoGo Logo, and cookbooks and all occasion cards.

I could go on & on. The best part was raising awareness of the HIV pandemic and the help that is needed. We are so inspired now, so I hope everyone of our Grannies will keep up the good work and never give up... we can do it! We have a GoGo man in our group. Did he ever work hard at our concert.

Thanks for reading this...and keep in touch. Hugs to all.
Barbara Archibald, Creston GoGo Grannies

PURSES RAISING FUNDS

October 23rd email:

My name is Lisa Jo Sun Walk and I am a grade 11 student at Sequoia Outreach School in Gleichen, Alberta, Canada. I am 18 years old and I have a 6 month old daughter named Aiden. Earlier this year I learned to make purses. I am also good at beading and other traditional art. (Did I mention that I'm a member of the Siksika Nation - Blackfoot tribe of Southern Alberta).

I am now teaching other kids at my school how to do this. I will earn credits in school also. My teacher told me about the 'Grandmother to Grandmother' program and I thought that we could make basic purses and then invite our Grandmothers in to help finish them. This way we would form our own Grandmother to Grandmother group. I think we could donate our purses to the Calgary group who sells their work a few times a year. Would it be OK for us to do this?

On our reserve Grandmothers are so important. We also lose lots of our young parents to the effects of poverty, drugs and alcohol. Even though our lives are sometimes hard we think they're not as difficult as those Grandmothers in Africa.

*Thank-you,
Lisa Jo Sun Walk*

ELLEN MONAGHAN OF UJAMA GRANNIES IN CALGARY, ALBERTA

October 18th email:

Our sale was a resounding success and we were all absolutely delighted with the crowd and the overwhelming comments of support. We sold out before noon hour but even those who came later often stayed for coffee and a chat. The best part of the whole sale was that people were so interested in what we are doing, in the Stephen Lewis Foundation and in the situation in Africa. We have a wonderful list of new people who would like to become purse producers or volunteer for general fundraising so the future looks so exciting.

We had 181 items for sale (If only we had been able to produce more we would have been able to sell so much more — next year!) and took in just over \$8,100 with sales and the coffee bar. We are looking at expenses of approximately \$1,600 — pay back for our producers and \$100 hall rental- so shall have profits of over \$6,000 to send to you plus some other profits from bags sold individually over the past few months.

We are having so much fun doing all this and we are growing by leaps and bounds. Was at a large high school yesterday to work out a plan with the fashion and design teacher who wants to get all her classes doing a "bag" assignment — the students seem really keen — and have enquiries from another high school to do the same. It would be wonderful to get some young people involved and thinking about Africa.

*Take care,
Ellen*