

**Hope during a critical time:** Restoring resilience for communities, families and the future

FALL 2019

# Grassroots



A staff member of Nyimbwa Multi-Purpose Organization of People Living with HIV/AIDS (NYIMUPHA), in Uganda, greets students during a school visit. NYIMUPHA supports orphaned and vulnerable girls with a holistic approach that includes education, and community sensitization and awareness outreach around HIV and AIDS and sexual reproductive health rights. Photo: Museruka Emmanuel



*the Stephen Lewis*  
**FOUNDATION**

260 Spadina Ave • Suite 100  
Toronto ON M5T 2E4  
Tel: 416-533-9292

Toll-free: 1-888-203-9990  
Email: [info@stephenlewisfoundation.org](mailto:info@stephenlewisfoundation.org)  
[www.stephenlewisfoundation.org](http://www.stephenlewisfoundation.org)

# Dear Friends,

## This newsletter arrives at a truly critical time.

On October 10th in Lyon, France, the replenishment conference was held for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. The world has come to depend on the Fund as the primary financial source to battle infectious disease.

In the case of HIV and AIDS, the priority could not be greater. In six crucial areas where the Foundation concentrates its work, the needs are more demanding than ever.

Every week, there are 6,200 new infections among women and young girls, ages 15 to 24. Last year, 160,000 children were newly infected. The most dramatic increase in prevalence rates is now occurring among the LGBTQ community. Grandmothers experience ever-greater pressures. Violence – and the threat of violence – continues to affect women’s ability to protect themselves from infection. People living with HIV and AIDS continue to face stigma and discrimination. And most disturbing, overall funding for infectious disease fell by \$1 billion between 2017 and 2018, the first funding decline in more than a decade.

Startlingly, the Global Fund only asked for \$14 billion for this replenishment. That’s \$18 billion short of what’s needed.

There was a poisonous mantra that began a few years ago asserting the “End of AIDS.” Predictably that was utter nonsense. The pandemic continues to plague the world: last year, over three quarters of a million deaths and almost two million new infections!

In light of this continuing crisis, the role of the Foundation is ever-more important. I’m hugely proud of the work of our partners on the ground, supported by such an engaged and devoted staff at headquarters.

May it continue ... no, it must continue.



**Stephen Lewis**

*Co-Chair of the Board and Co-Founder*



Photo: Alexis MacDonald/SLF

# “Support groups helped me to know things I didn’t know”

**W**hen Tadiwa\* was six years old, he lost both parents to AIDS. As with millions of children orphaned by the AIDS pandemic, his grandmother was the only person left to raise him. Chiedza Child Care Centre, a community-based organization in Zimbabwe, and an SLF partner, shared his story with us.

During a community visit, a Chiedza volunteer met Tadiwa and his grandmother, Joyce\*. Volunteers are integral to the holistic strategy of Chiedza and of our partner organizations in sub-Saharan Africa. Their connections to communities encourage openness and trust, crucial to supporting people in vulnerable situations. The volunteer recognized that Tadiwa, then nine years old, was ill, and supported Joyce in understanding the importance of taking him for health check-ups. He later tested positive for HIV, so Chiedza helped with access to antiretroviral treatment (ART).

Chiedza understood that for Tadiwa to regain his health, they needed to take a household approach that addressed both the emotional and material needs of the family. They helped his grandmother navigate the complex process of disclosing Tadiwa’s HIV status to him, in an age appropriate way. Chiedza then provided food packages, and assisted Joyce in obtaining his birth certificate, a crucial document when accessing government services and the formal school system. In addition, she joined a group for caregivers, which provided support and information to help raise Tadiwa, understand the complex and evolving nature of ART regimens, and find a safe space to share with people in similar circumstances.

For Tadiwa, Chiedza worked to equip him with the skills and support to live positively with HIV. Despite being on treatment and knowing his status, Tadiwa needed help to understand why he had to adhere to his medication for the rest of his life. He needed the psychosocial support to deal with the loneliness, discrimination, and stigma that often accompanies an HIV diagnosis. These were life-saving interventions. Many of Tadiwa’s peers living with HIV across sub-Saharan Africa fall between the cracks during the transition between pediatric care and the adult system. Statistics paint a grim picture: at a time when AIDS-related deaths in Africa are



Chiedza Child Care Centre, in Zimbabwe.  
Photo: Alexis MacDonald/SLF

dropping for adults and children, they are rising sharply for teenagers. However, Chiedza and his grandmother were there to ensure that Tadiwa had the tools he needed. In addition to the material support his family received, he was enrolled in one of their youth support groups in Mbare, where he participated in counselling.

“Support groups helped me to know things I didn’t know,” Tadiwa said. “I know that if I take my medications, I’ll live longer.” He also made more friends and joined the Chiedza School Study Group. One day, he hopes to be a doctor.

The impact of such holistic, community-led approaches has been tremendous, with successes achieved because of consistent funding and support for organizations like Chiedza. The majority of SLF partners that facilitate treatment access have adherence rates above 95%, which are indeed, inspiring successes.

*\* Pseudonyms to protect their identities.*



# “We breathe a bit easier”

## Organizations support grandmothers as they face climate-change disasters



Swaziland Positive Living (SWAPOL), in Eswatini. Photos: Paola Gianturco.

“I was told there will be floods, there will be cyclones,” grandmother Margaret\* recently shared with staff members of Friends of AIDS Support Trust (FAST) in Malawi. Hurricanes, droughts and other climate-change disasters affect every country in sub-Saharan Africa, and the challenges are greatest in communities facing poverty, marginalization and the AIDS pandemic. Grandmothers in communities where our partners work know this firsthand.

This summer, FAST staff members visited Margaret in her community, which was devastated by Cyclone Idai in March. Three of her four children had died of AIDS, and with her remaining daughter Edith\*, she was raising five grandchildren. For years, FAST has supported grandmothers as they cared for orphaned and vulnerable children, and during the cyclone, the organization provided food and clean-water supplies to many grandmothers.

Months after the storm, when FAST staff arrived at Margaret’s house to check in, they met Edith arriving home with bundles of grass. The family sold it in a local market to generate an income. Margaret appreciated how hard her daughter worked to support the grandchildren, who sometimes didn’t have enough food and couldn’t

go to school because of health issues. FAST knew that Margaret wasn’t scared of poverty; she knew what to do during food shortages; she knew how to till land, how to prepare it before the rains came, assuming they came. Her resilience and ingenuity has sustained her family. Now, the AIDS pandemic, compounded by environmental extremes due to climate change is putting her resilience and ingenuity to the test.

Melting ice, rising sea levels and warmer oceans are worsening the destructive capacity of storms, droughts, floods and desertification in sub-Saharan Africa. Cyclone Idai washed away crops and wrecked the lives of millions of people in Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. Margaret told FAST that she’d struggled to provide food to her grandchildren, struggled to keep them in school, and that they’d had breathing difficulties because of all the stress. Things were better now, partly thanks to FAST. Community-based organizations know what families and communities need as new challenges emerge because they are community members themselves.

“The support from FAST helps us to breathe a bit easier,” she said.

*\* Pseudonyms to protect their identities.*

# “We’re asking for human rights”

**K**asha Nabagesera had had enough. As a young, lesbian woman in Uganda, she’d faced harassment and discrimination daily. Police in Kampala were raiding bars and places where she and other members of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) communities hung out. Random attacks had left members of LGBTQ communities living in a climate of fear.

“People would wait for us outside and attack us,” she said. “We needed to do something.” Nabagesera did her research, learning about anti-LGBTQ laws and the human rights that counter them. “I introduced my friends to information I’d been reading online,” she explained. With support from LGBTQ communities, she founded Freedom & Roam Uganda (FARUG) in 2003. Since then, the organization has lobbied for the rights of women, worked to free them from violence, and continues to work to empower LBQ people in Uganda, because the situation now is worse than ever.

Today, in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa, people in LGBTQ communities are criminalized, exiled, jailed or murdered. Of 54 African countries, more than 30 have laws that criminalize consensual sex between men, and 24 have similar laws that apply to women. In recent weeks, international attention turned again on Uganda as a rise in hateful rhetoric towards LGBTQ communities was followed by the murder of four people. Amid recent reports the government would bring back anti-gay legislation, activists in the region knew this would lead to a spike in discrimination and atrocities. Violence and fear drive people into hiding, which means they can’t easily access preventative measures, healthcare or get tested for HIV – and so the virus spreads in LGBTQ communities.

Launched in 2017, the Stephen Lewis Foundation’s LGBTQ Africa Initiative was a response to the urgent need for HIV and AIDS services for LGBTQ communities in Africa. Community-based groups with whom we partner are run by and for LGBTQ communities and have developed resourceful ways to reach those most marginalized by violence and persecution. They provide alarm systems for workplaces, safety training for individuals who are attacked or arrested, stigma-free health services, as well as psychosocial support, HIV testing



Pepe Julian Onziema, Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG).  
Photo: Sarah Layton/SLF

and counselling, human rights training and advocacy, and education for government officials, police officers, teachers, healthcare professionals and parents. FARUG and 15 other organizations are part of the LGBTQ Africa Initiative, which, last year, reached 31,000 people in LGBTQ communities in Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG), played a large role in this outreach. Last month, Pepe Julian Onziema, a director with SMUG, visited Canada and called on all people who care about human rights and social justice: “Please pay attention to what’s happening. Across Africa, we’re standing up to discrimination. We’re demanding access to stigma-free health services, including HIV prevention and testing. We’re asking for discrimination-free education and employment. We’re asking for harassment-free housing opportunities – and for legal rights, especially the repeal of anti-LGBTQ legislation.”

This urgent work, and the need for international solidarity and support during this human rights crisis, is at the heart of the LGBTQ Africa Initiative. Our goal is to raise \$2 million over the next two years to support our partners in reaching 100,000 individuals in LGBTQ communities in Africa.

# Areas of work

**T**he Stephen Lewis Foundation's philosophy has always been firmly rooted in the notion that the expertise needed to turn the tide of HIV and AIDS in Africa is found at the community level, and that the communities are the experts on what they need, and what will defeat the pandemic. We partner with organizations who work in these areas:

**CHILDREN AND YOUTH:** The current generation of children and youth will lead Africa out of the AIDS pandemic. Since the beginning of the pandemic, grassroots organizations have provided care for children orphaned by AIDS – much of it led by grandmothers who developed visionary, holistic community programmes.

**GRANDMOTHERS:** Africa's grandmothers continue to care for millions of children orphaned by AIDS. They nurture, feed and send them to school, as well as teach them about HIV prevention, care and treatment. As community leaders and experts, grandmothers mobilize and advocate for their own human rights, and for the rights of the children in their care.

**HOME-BASED CARE:** In 10 of the 15 countries where our partners work, only one doctor is available for every 10,000 people. Home-based care workers – most of them women who volunteer their time, skills and leadership – travel great distances, visiting countless homes each day. The trust and healing they generate is immeasurable.

**POSITIVE LIVING:** Throughout sub-Saharan Africa, people living with HIV and AIDS – many of them women – are increasing awareness, providing leadership, and educating their communities about HIV prevention, care and treatment. By their example of positive living, they encourage others to get tested, speak out and advocate for access to antiretroviral medicines and the repeal of outdated or punitive laws.

**VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS:** Violence – and the threat of violence – traumatizes women and girls at every stage of life, and includes the additional threat of contracting HIV and other diseases. The Foundation partners with organizations that challenge gender-based violence and provide urgent, life-saving care and critical supports.

**LGBTQ AFRICA INITIATIVE:** In many parts of sub-Saharan Africa, LGBTQ communities are under attack. The Foundation partners with 16 LGBTQ organizations led by courageous and strategic activists who reach those who are marginalized and targeted, providing access to HIV testing and counselling, as well as solidarity, legal services, healthcare, support and hope.

## Imagine Canada Standards Program

The Stephen Lewis Foundation believes that transparency and accountability are essential. With this in mind, we are proud to be accredited by Imagine Canada's Standards Program.





# Financial overview July 2003–June 2019

## Programmes

We're committed to getting the majority of our revenue to the organizations with whom we work. Between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2019, the Stephen Lewis Foundation disbursed and committed a cumulative \$122.8 million in programme spending, including direct support to over 1,800 initiatives with 325 community-based organizations in 15 African countries. This represents more than 82% of total expenditures over the past 16 years.

## Administration

Administration is essential to the success of every charitable organization. At the Foundation, costs associated with day-to-day operations and expenditures ensure we're accountable for how funds are being allocated. We're committed to keeping these administrative costs low through in-kind donations and pro-bono support. We're proud to report that over the past 16 years, administrative costs were 10% of our total spending.

## Funds Development

In order to continue to support the innovative programming developed by our African partners, the Foundation has increased its fundraising capacity to engage supporters through a variety of recognizable initiatives, such as special events that feature the voices and work of our partners, and by encouraging monthly donations. Over the past 16 years, our fundraising costs were 8% of our total expenditures.

## Want More Information?

For a copy of the Foundation's full audited financial statements and the link to our annual Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) charity returns, please visit: [stephenlewisfoundation.org/who-we-are/financials](http://stephenlewisfoundation.org/who-we-are/financials)

The Foundation's fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30. Our auditors are Grant Thornton LLP Chartered Accountants. The Foundation's charitable number is 89635 4008 RR0001. If you have questions about our financial statements, please call 1-888-203-9990 ext. 244 to speak to Esther Vise, Director of Finance.

## Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign

The Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign was launched in response to the crisis faced by African grandmothers as they struggled to care for millions of children orphaned by AIDS. Since 2006, more than \$36 million has been raised. The Campaign is a dynamic, global movement driven by groups of grandmothers and *grandothers* in Canada, Australia, the UK and the USA. Through a variety of creative events, including concerts, Scrabble tournaments, bike-a-thons and jewelry, craft and garage sales, these groups work tirelessly to raise awareness and funds—with 90% of those funds sent directly to community-based organizations run by and for grandmothers. Members of the Campaign know that when grandmothers are galvanized, nothing can stop them!

**"Our involvement in the Grandmothers Campaign has given meaning to our lives and shape to our days," shared a long-standing member of the Campaign. "Each of us finds our niche and lends our talents to the work. As we work on committees and participate in our events together, we build a community of friends and supporters. I can be stronger, kinder, more myself because of them."**

# The holiday season is nearly here, and our new holiday tribute cards are now available!

Make donations in lieu of gifts this year, and send beautiful printed cards or e-cards to your family, friends and colleagues. We can send you cards to personalize and deliver yourself, or we can mail cards on your behalf. Or simply donate online and send e-cards for easy and immediate delivery. Strengthen the work of our grassroots partners by giving 'gifts' that are truly meaningful!



## Order your holiday cards today

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