



MANZINI STATEMENT

WE ARE GATHERED HERE IN MANZINI, SWAZILAND – 500 grandmothers from fourteen countries, sharing our experience and knowledge, and celebrating our progress in beating back the ravages of HIV and AIDS. In 2006, at the first Grandmothers' Gathering in Toronto, we heralded the dawn of a new movement. Four years later, the strength and momentum of our movement are undeniable. We, the grandmothers of Africa, issue this clarion call to the world.

In 2006 we were battered by grief, devastated by the deaths of our beloved sons and daughters, and deeply concerned for the futures of our grandchildren. We stand here today battered, but not broken. We are resilient, and stand unwavering in our resolve to move beyond basic survival, to forge a vibrant future for the orphans and grandmothers of Africa.

We are the backbones of our communities. We form the core of community-based care. With our love and commitment we protect and nurture our orphan grandchildren. Africa cannot survive without us.

Integrity and autonomy are at the heart of our agenda.

We demand the economic independence to support our families, to provide nutritious food; decent housing; access to ongoing quality education for our grandchildren; and a richer quality of life for us all.

We must have the resources to build our own capacity to raise healthy families and assist one another. We call for more training in critical areas such as home-based care, HIV/AIDS education, on parenting orphaned children and adolescents, health care, literacy, and financial management.

We have lived through the enormity of AIDS in our communities, and have played our part in helping our nations survive the devastation. Without us, the toll on orphans and our communities

would have been incalculable. Equal urgency and passion must now come from our Governments around the provision of services, and the guarantee and delivery of our rights. Urgent action must be taken in these priority areas:

1. Violence against grandmothers. These egregious acts, whether domestic violence, elder abuse, or accusations of witchcraft, must cease and be censured.
2. Grandmothers must have meaningful support in the form of pensions and social security.
3. Laws must be passed and implemented ensuring the safety and rights of grandmothers and their grandchildren.

We will continue to provide a protective embrace around our grandchildren and communities. Our hope, indeed, our expectation, is that our governments will provide our families with the social and legal protections – from inheritance laws to educational opportunities for our grandchildren.

To the international community we say: true sustainability is in the hands of grandmothers and other community activists. We call on you to deliver on your promises. We have reached a real turning point in the struggle to subdue the AIDS pandemic. Now we are seeing the growing impact of our joint efforts, the need for increased and consistent resources is greater than ever.

We are leaders in our communities and countries. We have come together in this historic moment to lay the groundwork for greater support from our friends, our governments and the international community. We will continue to come together until such time as we and our grandchildren are secure and able to thrive. We will continue to stand in solidarity with one another throughout Africa and with our Canadian sisters.

We are strong, we are visionary, we have faith and we are not alone. Together we will turn the tide of AIDS.

Viva!

MANZINI, SWAZILAND
8 MAY 2010