

2010 African Grandmothers' Gathering Manzini, Swaziland



They marched in the thousands, grandmothers from Ethiopia, gogos from South Africa, nya nyas from Kenya, sho shos from Zambia, grannies from 13 African countries, marching in solidarity in the first-ever international Grandmothers' Gathering on African soil. Striding alongside them were 42 Canadian grandmothers, members of the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign.

"Phezu Kom Khono!" rang out, and thousands of voices, African and Canadian, took up the call. "Raise your arms, women!" resounded, as other songs and chants broke out spontaneously along the way. Bent over with arthritis and years of back-breaking work, older grannies leaned on younger arms to struggle up the hill. They could have ridden in one of the vans provided, but "No," they said, "I'm here to WALK!"

The African Grandmothers' Gathering was a clarion call to the world to pay attention to the phenomenal work of these women. At the workshop sessions the day before the march, they spoke out about the enormity of the tasks they perform on a daily basis, the solutions they have invented out of desperate need, and the tremendous support they draw from collaborating with other women. They clearly identified their immediate and long-term needs, which were summarized in a call to action, **The Manzini Statement (see link below)**.

"We stand here today battered," it begins, "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." The demands begin with economic independence, nutritious food and decent housing; include quality education, and conclude with a richer quality of life for them all. They insist on urgent action in three priority areas: violence against grandmothers, meaningful support, and laws to ensure the safety and rights of grandmothers and their grandchildren.

At the end of the walk, African and Canadian grandmothers committed to turn the tide of AIDS. "We are strong, we are visionary, we have faith and we are not alone," they said in solidarity. The Canadians were transformed; they went home to raise a storm of protest across the country that cannot be ignored. HIV and AIDS is not just Africa's problem - the response must be global.

<https://grandmotherscampaign.org/about-us/the-campaign/milestones/manzini-statement/>

