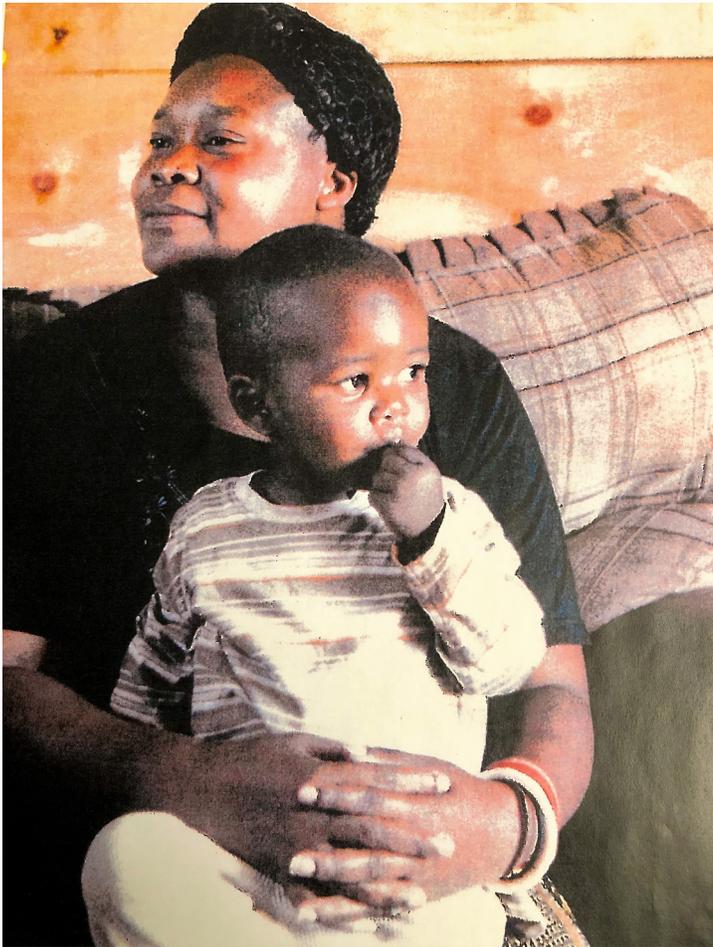


Statement by Lucia Mazibuko
'Grandmothers to Grandmothers' Press Conference MARCH 7, 2006



I am 52 years old and a granny of three little boys, of which one of them passed away. I am left with two and one of them is HIV-positive. I was blessed with six kids — three boys and three girls — and I have lost all three girls with the disease. So, it's been hard to be a granny, a mother...

Actually, I can start with being a mother: having kids, helping them to grow, and doing all those things for them. After, when you think that they are growing up and they are old, you just go back to feed them because they were now sick — you feed them, nappy them and do all those things for them. It's really difficult. I've lost my three daughters and my son-in-law and my husband (but he was not positive). Rosina, the sister at the clinic, started talking about the Gogo support group. I think it is healing, because at the group we talked about our differences. As gogos [grannies], we have different things: some are sick; some gogos are HIV-positive; others lost their kids; others lost their partners.

It's really difficult for us to deal with this thing. As gogos it is difficult to talk about AIDS, because when you start talking about it, people think that you are a bad mother. In my community, I am trying to counsel the other grannies. I'm not educated but I'm trying to counsel the other grannies by what I have experienced. Because

I'm not talking about what I've learnt, I'm talking about what I have experienced as a person.

I just want to thank Mr. Lewis, because when we first met him, he really made — I don't know how to put it — our lives better, because he opened our ears, he talked to us about this; he tried to explain about this AIDS and he tried to make us work together as gogos. So, he really means a lot to us. He is doing a lot of things for us, so I really appreciate it.

Lucia Mazibuko is a granny and member of South Africa's Gogo Granny Support Group. She lost two daughters, a son-in-law and a grandson to HIV and AIDS and is now caring for her two remaining orphaned grandsons, one of whom is HIV-positive.

