

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DECEMBER 1ST, WORLD AIDS DAY

**AFRICAN GRANDMOTHERS TRIBUNAL:
Seeking Justice at the Frontlines of the AIDS Crisis**

Stephen Lewis Foundation Releases Groundbreaking Report

(November 29, 2013; Toronto, Canada) The Stephen Lewis Foundation releases a groundbreaking report today, just days before World AIDS Day, on the next steps needed to turn the tide of AIDS in Africa – a manifesto for the rights of grandmothers who have become the guardians of sub-Saharan Africa’s future.

“It’s time to recognize that African grandmothers at the forefront of the HIV and AIDS crisis must have our human rights respected and protected,” states the report from the People’s Tribunal held earlier this year in Vancouver.

The African Grandmothers Tribunal included eminent activists Gloria Steinem, Joy Phumaphi, Stephen Lewis, David Suzuki, Theo Sowa and Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond. They heard African grandmothers demand better protection of human rights for themselves and their communities. The report recognizes that Africa’s recovery from the ravages of the AIDS pandemic depends on these grandmothers, and the time has come to recognize, respect and support their efforts to create better lives for the next generation.

The story of the African grandmothers is one of the most important stories of the HIV and AIDS crisis in Africa – but, until now, the denial of these valiant women’s human rights has been hidden from view. To mark World AIDS Day and the 10th anniversary of the Stephen Lewis Foundation (SLF), the Foundation is issuing the Report of the African Grandmothers Tribunal.

The United Nations estimates that there are 16 million children orphaned by AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa. A great many of them are being cared for by grandmothers—not always their own. The Tribunal provided a public forum for the grandmothers and their organizations to testify about the human rights violations they face on a daily basis: violence, property theft, wife inheritance, extreme poverty, income and food insecurity.

“It’s time to support our organizations fully, and put systems in place to address our needs and the needs of the children in our care,” grandmothers told the Tribunal and hundreds of AIDS activists who gathered in Vancouver in early September. “It’s time to recognize our contribution to the survival of our communities, and the expertise we have developed to do

so, by giving us our rightful place and voice wherever decisions are being made. We will not let the AIDS pandemic defeat us, nor destroy our communities, but we cannot prevail alone.”

In this report, the members of the Tribunal call on governments in sub-Saharan Africa, the international community and donors to protect grandmothers, promote and enforce their human rights, and empower them to take a leading role in the development of policies and programmes to turn the tide of AIDS in Africa.

The Stephen Lewis Foundation has responded to the report by committing to redoubling efforts to support grandmothers’ role in fighting the AIDS pandemic in Africa.

“You have given us a clear agenda for support – whether it’s a global fund for cash transfers, the need for national level advocacy, the continuing urgency for land rights and housing, access to healthcare, universal and accessible education, food security, and laws protecting grandmothers from violence and the means to enforce them,” said the Foundation’s Executive Director, Ilana Landsberg-Lewis. “We commit to redoubling our efforts and to bend every fibre of our collective beings to break the inertia, the silence, and the dam of neglect and negligence that prevents the flood of resources from flowing. We will be accountable to you, and heed you, as must the world.”

-30-

Media contact:

Alexis MacDonald, Director of External Relations
amacdonald@stephenlewisfoundation.org or 416-533-9292 x300

Further information:

The Report of the African Grandmothers Tribunal is available online at africangrandmothertribunal.org or by phoning 416-533-9292 x0.

About the Stephen Lewis Foundation

The Stephen Lewis Foundation (SLF) works with community-level organizations that are turning the tide of HIV/AIDS in Africa by providing care and support to women, orphaned children, grandmothers and people living with HIV and AIDS. Since 2003, we have funded over 700 initiatives, partnering with 300 community-based organizations in the 15 African countries hardest hit by the pandemic.

These grassroots groups are the lifeline for their communities: they provide counselling and education about HIV prevention, care and treatment; distribute food, medication and other necessities; reach the sick and vulnerable through home-based health care; help orphans and vulnerable children access education and work through their grief with innovative and creative programming; and support grandmothers caring for their orphaned grandchildren.