

grandmothers for grandmothers

a campaign to raise awareness and support in the U.S. for
the Nyaka & Kutamba grannies in southwestern Uganda

Grandmothers: The Heroes of the AIDS Pandemic in Africa (and at Nyaka)

Some statistics:

*Grandmothers care for approximately 45% of all orphaned children in Uganda
Poverty rates in grandmother-headed households is 29% higher than in other households*

Sub-Saharan African has an estimated 13 million children orphaned due to HIV/AIDS. This number is rising. Experts say this figure will reach 18-20 million by 2010 and 40 million by 2020. Despite a large number of families and communities stepping up to care for many of these children, the problem is overwhelming. Especially in parts of the world where the daily struggle to survive is shared among entire communities. With people struggling to feed and care for themselves, the desperation to feed additional mouths is often too much to bear.

Imagine if you can, working hard and raising your children. Remember your children attending school. You remember sacrificing so your children could attend, this was an investment after all as your children would grow, gain employment, and take care of you in your old age. Now, imagine your investment dying tragically from a disease with no cure. After a few years, all three of your adult children have died. Now, there are nine grandchildren without a parent and in need of care. What choice do you have?

When going to classrooms to talk about Nyaka, I often ask children who would take care of you if, God forbid, something happened to your parents. Often, the majority of classes ring out with the answer of, "My Grandmother." Amidst the incredible orphans problem in Africa, communities have experienced the same response as grandmothers have stepped up and have become the heart of the response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. With no time to grieve for their own lost adult children, these heroic women take on the burdens of raising these orphans. Some grandmothers care for as many as fifteen to twenty. I can not imagine what this pandemic would even look like without these heroic women keeping the very fabric of their communities and countries intact.

Many people mistakenly view Nyaka as an orphanage. However, that is not what Nyaka is. All of our children live with either grandmothers or host families nearby. As part of a rural community, we thought it was important to keep the children connected as much as possible with the greater community - not isolated as in an orphanage. We also knew we could not provide only for the orphaned children who attend our schools. We knew that in order to find a sustainable solution to this devastating problem, we needed to work with the grandmothers who were struggling to care for these children. There is no Nyaka without these heroic women. The Nyaka Grandmothers to Grandmothers Program is our contribution to help ease the pain and provide support to these women.

You can help by starting a Grandmothers to Grandmothers group in your community. Please visit our contact page (<http://www.nyakaschool.org/contact>) and write in the comment section that you are interested in forming a local chapter. We will help you by providing materials on paper and on our website to help educate you more on the issue and how you can help.

For more information, contact us at info@nyakaschool.org.

