

# Why Are We Riding?

by Lisbie Rae

## To all cyclists in the Zoom meeting:

**How many of you are members of the Grandmothers Campaign?** You know already why we're riding. **How many of you are riding with us for the first time?** Welcome! You received a backgrounder on the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign from Stefa. It's a wonderful starting point for learning about the Campaign and finding your own, personal reasons for riding.

**I'm know why I'm riding -- to rebuild lives, to empower women, to celebrate grandmothers.**

**I'm riding to Rebuild Lives** – The Stephen Lewis Foundation partners with organizations in 15 sub-Saharan African countries at the grassroots in their communities – these local people are the experts! -- where they offer holistic support. These community-based organizations or CBOs are the ones that we will learn about as we ride virtually through their communities. They provide what's needed to rebuild after loss: grief counselling, education, healthy food, home-based care and clinics, income-generating projects, housing, anti-stigma workshops.

**I'm riding to Empower Women** – gender inequality drives the pandemic; the SLF supports women as they claim their rights (the right to say no to unprotected sex) and rise to positions of power in society

**I'm riding to Celebrate Grandmothers** – The SLF founded the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign in 2006 because they saw how crucial grandmothers are to the survival of their communities. Their beloved children die of AIDS, and these “heroes of the continent” as Stephen Lewis calls them, draw comfort and support from each other. They care for grandchildren bewildered by loss, and build a new life for them. Through loving the children, they rebuild their ravaged communities and forge a new future for their countries.

I'll end with three snapshots of memorable grandmothers I met in 2010 in South Africa and Swaziland at the African Grandmothers Gathering

- at **Tateni Home Based Care** in Mamelodi, South Africa – a CBO we will cycle through -- I met
  - **Elizabeth:** looked at photo of my daughter. “Ah,” she said. “I had 9, but now, only 1.”
  - **Lily:** got us up for a keep fit class. At age 80, she could kick higher than anyone! “When we are fit,” she said, “we can do **more.**”
- **In Manzini, Swaziland**
  - **Siphewe Hlope,** founder of Swaziland Positive Living, whom Stephen calls “a force of nature”, signalled the beginning of the Grandmothers March through Manzini. “Raise your arms, women!!” she said. But she said it like this: “**Phezu com Khona**”. And the voices of 1500 grandmothers echoed back, “**Phezu com Khona!!!**” Shall we raise our voices too? In solidarity? Say it to yourself. [Hold up card with words written on it.] Now say it to the world! Say it for Siphewe and the Grandmothers of Africa.

**Phezu com Khona!!!!**

