

Gogos reach out to African grandmothers

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A group of Burnaby granies are looking to raise \$10,000 to support African grandmothers who are raising a generation of children orphaned by AIDS.

To mark the 10-year anniversary of the Stephen Lewis Foundation's Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign, which in 2006 brought 100 African grandmas and 200 of their Canadian counterparts together, the Burnaby chapter is launching the Power of 10 on Mother's Day. The fundraising initiative asks 1,000 residents to each donate \$10.

They're back to raising young children

"These grandmothers have now accepted they're done raising their children, then they're back to raising young children and trying to find money for their school supplies, their school uniforms and that sort of thing," says Burnaby Gogo member Laurie Bogner, who has three grandchildren of her own.

To date, \$25 million has been raised by more than 240 Gogo groups across the country.

The money goes towards putting the kids through school, teaching them about HIV prevention, creating local savings and loans groups and participating in innovative income-generating programs.

Bogner joined the Gogo group last June after moving from Saskatchewan. She had belonged to a similar kind of organization for five years before that and initially signed up after visiting Africa in 2009.



Reaching out: Sharon Woloschuk and Laurie Bogner are with the Burnaby chapter of the Gogos. The Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign is asking 1,000 residents to donate \$10 each to their Power of 10 initiative. The money raised by the group helps to benefit African grandmothers who are raising their orphaned grandchildren. PHOTO JENNIFER GAUTHIER

"I felt so grateful for everything I had, that my petty little complaints about, 'Oh my goodness, this apple is bruised,' they seemed so small compared to these huge things they're over-

coming," she recalls of her trip to Mali. "When I started hearing stories about some of these grandmothers, what they did with so little, ... it really touched my heart."

One story in particular stayed with Bogner. The Stephen Lewis Foundation had bought a goat for a grandmother and her family. A foundation rep went to visit a few months later, but

didn't see the goat outside. The animal had actually been living inside the grandmother's bedroom.

"It might seem silly, but it was that like, oh my goodness, to that extreme, how

valuable this was to her that she gave up her bedroom so that the goat could be safe, protecting it from anything that might happen to it," Bogner says.

WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

To donate to the Power of 10, which wraps up next March on International Women's Day, see their fundraising site at www.tinyurl.com/Powerof10Bby.

Interested in becoming a Gogo member? The Burnaby group meets on the third Monday of every month. Being a grandmother is not a requirement.

For more on the local group, visit www.facebook.com/burnaby.gogos.

Who are the Gogos? A look at how it began

The Stephen Lewis Foundation launched the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign - a.k.a. the Gogos - in March 2006.

It came about in response to the crisis faced by grandmothers in Africa as they struggled to care for the millions of children

who were being orphaned by AIDS.

The campaign now includes more than 240 grandmothers' groups (you don't have to be a grandmother to join) across the country, who raise money in a wide variety of ways to help the foundation's work

with community organizations in Africa.

Money raised is used to help grandmothers in Africa with their immediate, day-to-day needs - such as food, health care, transportation, housing, school fees and supplies - as well as longer-term needs such

as parenting and business skills, bereavement counselling, HIV awareness training and support groups.

You can find out more about the effort at www.grandmotherscampaign.org.