

Voices of Advocacy: Older Women Speak Out A Facilitator's Guide for Grandmother Groups

This guide provides ideas for designing and carrying out a session with group members in the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign. The use of the video and the discussion questions in this Guide will stimulate reflections and conversations that address the following **objectives**:

- To motivate group members by recognizing the power and passion that women in the Grandmothers movement bring to the fight for social justice and the rights of women and children
- To allow group members to explore their own experiences and attitudes toward activism and their involvement in the cause
- To increase understanding about advocacy and its role in the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign
- To recognize and discuss how older women are breaking down negative stereotypes about growing older in today's society
- To learn more about how to engage and nurture group members as activists, leaders and learners in contemporary society
- To increase understanding of how the HIV/AIDS pandemic is affecting families, grandmothers and vulnerable children in sub-Saharan Africa, and how Canadian grandmothers stand in solidarity with their sisters in Africa.

Accompanying handouts (free for downloading at www.grannyvoices.com) can be used to stimulate more discussion or as take away learning pieces of information.

Set-Up and Timing

1. Get agreement from your group that you will have an interactive learning session that will address some of the objectives outlined above. Groups who have used the video have found it to be highly motivating and a good way to engage group members in a meaningful discussion that goes beyond "business of the day".
2. Agree to set aside some time at a meeting or designate a special session to see the video and have a discussion about it. This will take a minimum of 30 minutes. However you will have a much richer discussion (and be able to address more of the questions below) if you set aside 60 to 90 minutes. If you have more than 15 participants, it is recommended that you break into smaller groups to address some of the questions so that everyone has a chance to speak, followed by a brief discussion as a whole group.

3. The video is in the same format as commercial videos you rent or buy. It can be played on your home equipment (TV and DVD player) or on a computer with a DVD play application. If you are showing it on a computer (or from a computer through a projector) make sure you have speakers to project the sound and ensure that everyone can hear the dialogue.

3. Preview the video and test out your equipment ahead of time. Make sure that the video can be easily viewed and heard by all in your meeting space.

A Sample Session

1. Introduce the session.
2. Show the video (10 minutes)
3. Open the discussion by asking the following question:

What were some of the feelings, reactions and thoughts you had while watching the video?

4. Discuss any or all of the following questions (can be done on an individual basis, as an open exercise or discussed in small groups). Take some time after people have talked about each question to summarize what you have heard.
 - *How do you understand/define advocacy?*
 - *How do you relate to the women and stories in the video, for example what was your experience of activism growing up? Is our generation different from previous ones?*
 - *Why do you feel passionately about this cause? What motivates you to advocate for and with our sisters in Africa?*
 - *How does the Grandmothers movement overturn negative images and stereotypes about women growing older in Canadian society? What new images does this video help create?*
 - *What can we learn from the Hummingbird story about engaging and nurturing our members in the fight to turn the tide on HIV/AIDS in Africa?*
 - *One of the women in the video says that the Grandmothers Campaign is based "on solidarity not charity". What is the difference between solidarity and charity? What does this mean in terms of our work?*
 - *Do advocacy and fundraising go together?*
5. Take a look at how your group operates. Consider the following questions:
 - *Do we operate in a way that builds community, engagement and empowerment at three levels--within our group and at community and global levels? Are there things we might want to do to enhance our efforts?*

- Are we happy with our level of involvement in advocacy, educational outreach and fundraising? Are there things we might want to do to marry these activities or enhance our efforts in all or any of these areas?

Note: Reading the handout “Ten Principles for Engaging and Nurturing Older Women Activists will give you some ideas to think about.

6. **Optional: Provide more information** on active aging, older women in Canada and Africa, and key principles for engaging and nurturing older women as voluntary activists, the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign, etc. (see handouts). This can be done at any point in the session or provided as take-away information.

7. Tell participants that they can watch the video again or download it for free, and learn more at the following website: www.grannyvoices.com. **Conclude** by thanking participants for their participation and identifying any follow up action that is required. **Celebrate the friendship and solidarity in your group.**

Handouts and Background Material (available at www.grannyvoices.com)

Some Facts about Older Women in Canada and in sub-Saharan Africa

This handout provides information about demographic trends, health, income and the living experiences of older women in Canada and in sub-Saharan Africa

Ten Principles for Engaging and Nurturing Older Women Activists

This handout provides ten principles for successfully engaging and nurturing older women as activists for a cause. These principles are drawn from the experience of the Canadian Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign.

Further Information and Recommended Sources

This handout provides information about the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign, the National Advocacy Committee and suggestions for further reading.

Guiding Principles for Grandmother Groups

These principles, which were developed by the Greater Vancouver Area GoGos, provide a value-based foundation for the work of grandmother groups.

Sharing the Message with Others

Consider using the video and learning materials with other groups and individuals (for example, women’s groups, retired teachers and nurses, classes in gerontology/aging, women’s studies and international development) as a way of reaching out with information about the Grandmothers Campaign and the contributions of older women in society.

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