

An Organization of International Cooperative Groups for Clinical Trials in Gynecologic Cancers

## **Grandmother Movement in South Africa**





#### GYNECOLOGIC CANCER INTERGROUP

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## **Gogos: The context of ageing in modern day South Africa**

- Traditionally, older people respected as the source and custodian of family history, culture, and wisdom
- Today, older people can no longer expect to be cared for by their families:
  - Gogos (grandmothers) are expected to look after the grandchildren
  - $\circ~$  Relatives visit on pension day and demand money
  - Youth listen more to their peers
  - Gogos may not receive child grants for children at home or money taken
    - Financial, emotional and physical strain





## The challenges facing older women:

- Often the main breadwinner in the family (pension/grant)
- Raising the next generation alone
- Isolation, stigma, widowhood, poverty
- Gender-based abuse/violence/rape
- Health issues & impact of HIV
- Need for household sexual and

reproductive health information and services

- Intergenerational challenges at home:
  - Unemployment
  - Literacy, skill and culture
  - Teenage pregnancy
  - Generation gap: expectations and chores
  - Youth drug/alcohol addiction (violence)
  - Feelings of lack of respect



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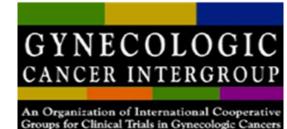
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#### **Government responses to supporting gogos:**

- Government support = 'hand outs' and events
- Pensions & child care grants = inadequate
- Medical facilities/orphanages = under resourced
- Information/support for elderly rights = inadequate
- Lack of public transport; high private transport costs
- Unfriendly forms and front-line staff with long queues at offices
- NGO's usually take the initiative when partnering with Government
- NGO's fill the gaps







### **Grandmother programmes - Platform for sharing:**

- Encourage gogos to share hope, joy, grief, wisdom and faith together
- Skills training to recognize and address power disparities and abuse; to negotiate and articulate rights and values
- Build awareness of health and wellness
- Preserving what is best in tradition and culture
- Advocacy for the voice of gogos (seniors) to be heard power of numbers
- Build self-worth, release from past pain in order to move forward
- Promote financial independence through economic empowerment and sharing resources
- Collective voice to demand services





## **Sharing life and opportunities:**

- ✓ Support groups
- Saving schemes: use funds for starting and running businesses, supporting household needs, burials/funerals, building houses, specia events, education
- ✓ Vegetable gardening and farming (food security and extra income)
- ✓ Sewing and beading groups
- ✓ Small business (bakery, crèche, poultry/eggs, etc.)
- ✓ Brick making & house repair
- ✓ Cooperatives
- ✓ Collective support at government offices





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#### Food security through vegetable gardening and



#### **Encouragement through recognition**





Cervix Cancer Education Symposium, January 2019, South Africa

OVC feeding scheme

#### Health and empowerment through sports



## Skills, training and enterprise

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#### Parenting and family support



### **Grandmothers need for Health and Wellness:**

- HIV, BP, sugar/Diabetes awareness and testing
- Nutritional advice (themselves & children)
- Counselling
- ✤ Referrals
- Field Officer home visits
- \* Awareness of children and youth health
- HIV/AIDS, TB and STI screening for family members (often too ashamed to talk about these issues cultural taboo)
- Support for HIV-infected grandchildren and medication adherence
- Information and education about diseases (i.e. cancer) and screening awareness





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- **Cervical Cancer within In-Patient Unit (IPU)**
- at Hillcrest AIDS Centre Trust
- Oncology crisis in KZN
- Linked to HPV high prevalence



- Young women stabilize HIV with ARVs (achieve reduced viral load) but cancer then goes untreated so gogos still impacted by the loss of the middle generation
- Women have extended stay in Unit (+/- 6 months) because no where else to go and no care at home
- Good policy....BUT on the ground: 1. pap smears not done, 2. if done, no results or follow up (i.e. lost forms), 3. positive results but no treatment or delays in appointments = unnecessary loss of life
- Diagnosed (stage 1) but no treatment or asked to return after long waiting periods – arrive at IPU (stage 4) for palliative care
- Gogos are losing their daughters and granddaughters leaving them again as care givers and breadwinners (\*Video)



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## Influence through advocacy and rights awareness

- the SA Grandmothers' Movement









the stephen Lewis

FOUNDATION

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# Siyabonga! Thank you!



