



The  
Teresa  
Group

# ANNUAL REPORT 2017-18

The Teresa Group's mission is to advance  
the dignity and wellbeing of children and  
families affected by HIV and AIDS

## Strategic Directions 2016-2018

**LEADERSHIP:** Position The Teresa Group as a leader on issues related to children and families affected by HIV

**PROGRAMS:** Provide targeted, unique and high-quality programs and services

**PARTNERSHIPS:** Enhance and strengthen everything we do through strategic partnerships

# SOME HIGHLIGHTS FROM OUR YEAR

## LEADERSHIP

We are excited about the progress we have made in this area over the past year. Revising the “How do I tell my kids?” booklet to support parents who want to tell their children about their HIV status has given us updated information in a fresh new look and, most importantly, the booklet is now available online. This means that anyone can download the print-ready version or read it online.

Once the very exciting news about “U=U” came out, there were lots of questions about how this related to infant feeding. “U=U” emerged from scientific evidence that if a person living with HIV consistently takes medication as prescribed and maintains an undetectable viral load, the virus cannot be transmitted sexually. However, this does not apply to breastfeeding and so The Teresa Group provided leadership to enhance understanding about the risks of HIV transmission through breastmilk.

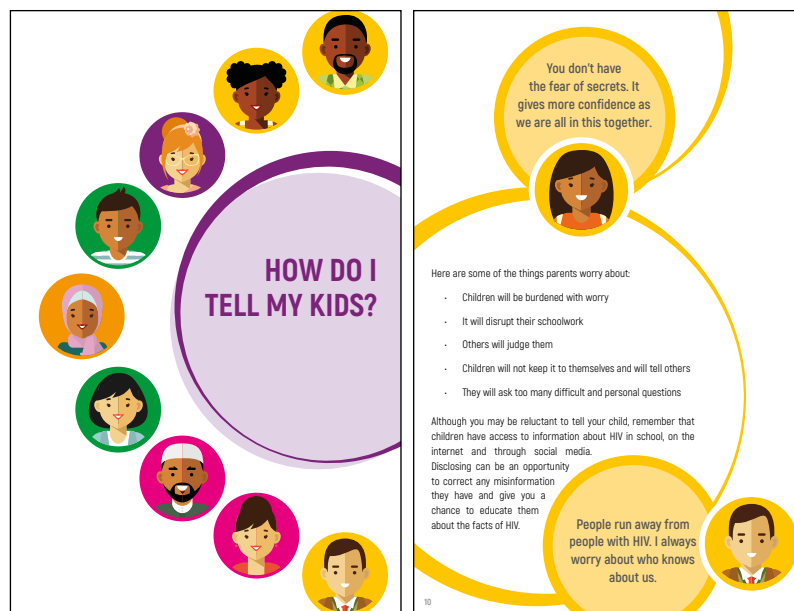
We are most proud of strides we have made creating meaningful opportunities for people living with HIV to become engaged with the organization at every level.

## Dudu’s story illustrates PHA leadership:

About ten years ago, Dudu came to Canada from Zimbabwe with her baby. She felt very stigmatized by her HIV status and was initially shy and withdrawn. As a naturally outgoing and friendly person, Dudu began to connect with other women when she came into our office. She quickly formed friendships and soon she and her friends would arrange to come to The Teresa Group together. As her child grew older, she enrolled him in other programs at The Teresa Group. Dudu showed interest in becoming a volunteer and being more engaged with the organisation. Her interest in governance led to her being elected to the Board of Directors and she became an active member of the Fundraising Committee. Dudu continues to be an excellent advocate for the organisation and often encourages other parents to become more involved.

## PROGRAMS

We continue to provide unique, targeted programs for families with children of all ages and developmental stages. We have reviewed, updated and developed new resources for pregnant women living with HIV and for new Moms with infants. Our award-winning “Leading the Way” program for young children continues to help kids develop friendships, social skills, collaboration and empathy. In June we brought our “Leap for Success” tutor-mentor program to a close but have started a new “Family Strengthening” program for families with children in the middle years (age 10-14) who have recently learned about their parents’ HIV status. We have worked hard to integrate our programming for adolescents,



How Do I Tell My Kids - HIV disclosure booklet

particularly supporting those living with HIV preparing to move over to adult care settings. Through the use of Digital Story Telling methods in our “Leading the Way” groups for teens, the participants have developed much-needed peer support networks and enhanced their understanding of the issues they face. They have also developed very powerful and moving videos that are available on our website.

Our programming at SickKids Hospital twice a week through the year has been described by many of the participants as their only safe space to discuss the difficult issues they face dealing with HIV-stigma as well as the regular stresses of adolescence. The program has also effectively linked youth to other programs such as “Leading the Way” and Summer Camp CiT leadership training.

Our broad range of practical support items also help to relieve financial stresses, engage clients and build trusting relationships.

## **Evelyn's story illustrates the impact of our programs:**

Evelyn and her four children arrived in Canada as refugee claimants. During the immigration screening process, Evelyn was diagnosed with HIV and was referred to The Teresa Group by the hospital where she was receiving treatment. During her intake, Evelyn became engaged with our Family Support Program, receiving practical support items such as grocery cards, transit tokens and diapers. Her older children received new backpacks filled with school supplies from our annual "Back to School" program. Purchasing these necessary items would have used up the family's entire food budget for the month. Evelyn and her family are now Canadian Permanent Residents. Evelyn has a full-time job, her oldest child is looking forward to starting post-secondary education in September and the other children are actively engaged in their various schools and the community. They are also all engaged in programming at The Teresa Group and the family enjoys a broad range of friends and support networks.

## **PARTNERSHIPS**

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Our annual Summer Camp would not be possible without our partnership with Moorelands. The 2017 camp expanded to include more kids, youth and volunteer counsellors from the Ottawa region and was once again a huge success. After 5 years of running our Summer Camp, it is so exciting to see those who were campers as kids and then CiT leaders, return as adult volunteer counsellors. Camp evaluations continue to reflect the life-changing nature of this week-long wilderness experience.

With the emergence of the #MeToo movement, our counselling program saw a marked increase in reports of intimate partner violence. In the past six months we have increased and strengthened our partnerships with women's shelters and organisations in the violence against women sector.

Our membership with OCASI (Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants) has strengthened our programming and has also allowed us to provide capacity development to staff in settlement agencies to enhance their understanding of the issues faced by newcomer families affected by HIV.

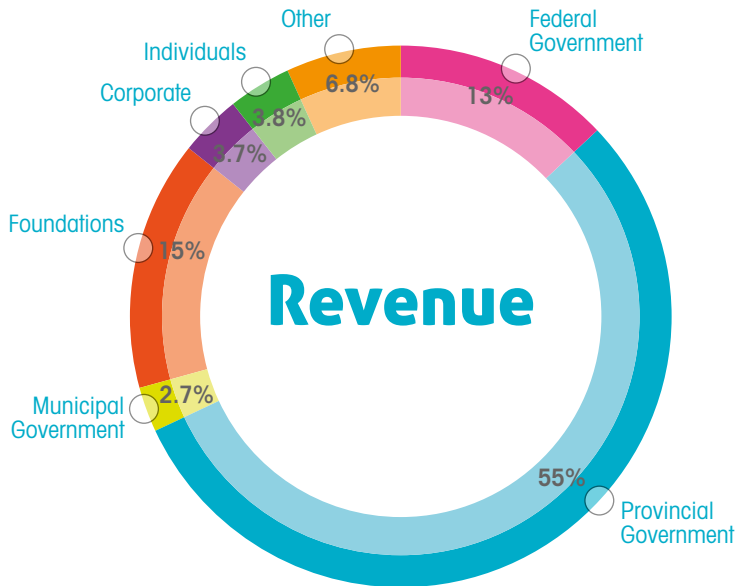
The Teresa Group co-founded the global Coalition for Children Affected by AIDS over a decade ago and continues to be engaged with international work by acting as the Coalition's fiscal agent and Treasurer. The Coalition has made exciting changes over the past 18 months, increasing its global advocacy work and engaging women living with HIV as Ambassadors and spokespersons.

## **Lira's story illustrates the impact of partnerships on our ability to serve our clients:**

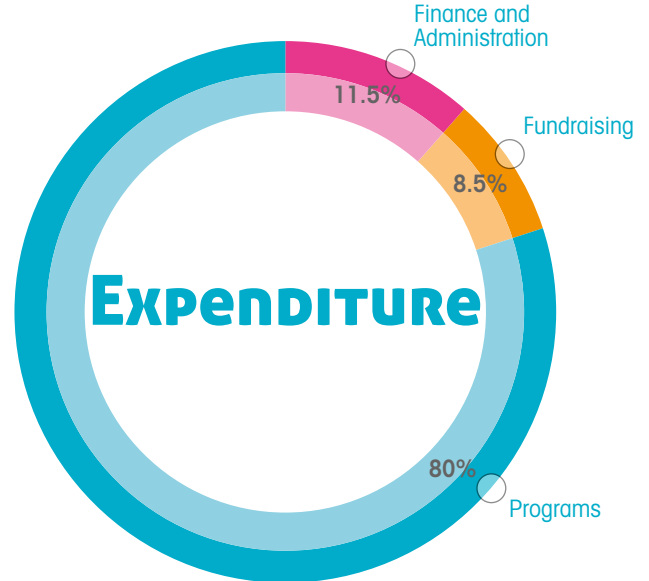
One day, Lira came to the office seeking emergency assistance fleeing a relationship that was characterized as physically and verbally abusive. Staff acted swiftly and, thanks to strong relationships with staff in the shelter sector, supported Lira in locating a shelter to give her and her kids a safe place to live and support to find stable housing. A few months later around the holidays, Lira said that with the help of the shelter, she was able to find permanent housing for herself and her children. To support Lira and her children with their transition to independence, The Teresa Group provided Lira with new clothes for the children, holiday gifts so she could provide her children with some holiday cheer and food vouchers to create a holiday feast for the family. Her children are now enrolled in a school close to their new home and are doing well. They continue to attend programs at The Teresa Group and have formed friendships and learned important life skills that help strengthen their resilience.

# FINANCIAL INFORMATION

## Where Does Our Funding Come From?



## How Is Our Funding Spent?



Full audited financial statements for 2017-18 can be found on our website [www.teresagroup.ca](http://www.teresagroup.ca)

## BOARD MEMBERS

Andrea Westbrook (President)

Kevin Landry (Vice-President)

Ian Smith (Treasurer)

Saara Greene (Secretary)

Emily Carson (Director)

B'onje Habanyama (Director)

Muluba Habanyama (Director)

Dale Maitland (Director)

Sarah Pole (Director)

Blythe Winters (Director)

## STAFF

Nicci Stein (Executive Director)

Chilombo Olawoye (Program Manager – on leave)

Ron McGee (Office Manager)

Samara Carroll (Acting Program Manager)

Kelly Armstrong (Development Officer)

Jaleesa Bygrave (Family Support Coordinator)

Tjireja Hipikuruka (Peer Program Coordinator)

Melody Lotfi (Family Support Coordinator)

Dorothy Odhiambo (Family Support Coordinator)

Shai Rowan (Family Support Coordinator)