



## Global Voices: Celebrating International Development Week 2008

### Women are on the Frontline: Kenyan grandmothers bring hope to a generation of AIDS orphans

Marion Sandilands, CHF

Embodying a spirit of hope, the Tumaini Women's Self-Help Group in Kenya struggles to cope with the effects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on their families. Having lost their children, these grandmothers must raise their grandchildren.

In order to support themselves, the Tumaini group started a quarrying business. CHF, a Canadian NGO, partners with the group to invest in tools and hire workers to chisel stones from a rock-face and fashion into blocks, which the grandmothers sell.

Additionally, each granny runs her own small business to raise money in the short term. The grannies raise chickens, grow cabbages, make handbags and grow bananas. Each saves 100 shillings per week (about \$1.50), which is pooled and given to one granny each week so she can make a bigger investment.

Elizabeth Wanjiku's two sons died of AIDS and she is raising her six grandchildren by herself. Instead of sitting at home feeling sorry for herself, she feels comforted and empowered as a member of Tumaini. The group enables her to start projects to earn money to feed and educate her grandchildren.

These women have experienced incredible loss of family and livelihood; it would be easy for them to give up hope in the face of tragedy. These women know that together, they can support each other and face the challenges ahead.