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25 FOR 25 SERIES

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25 for 25 is an original content series by Gucci and CHIME FOR CHANGE to mark the historic milestone of Beijing +25 in March, as well as Women's History Month. The series will highlight activists, CHIME Advisory Board members, partners and supporters who represent the progress made on gender equality over the past 25 years, and the emerging next generation continuing this critical work.



On Women & Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, CHIME is honored to feature its Advisory Board member **Emma France**, the Global Development and Strategic Engagement Director at **mothers2mothers**, an organization working with HIV-positive women to eliminate AIDS and one of CHIME's current nonprofit partners. Explore Emma's reflections on her commitment to amplifying the voices of girls and women in Africa and beyond, and the work that still needs to be done, below.

What are your hopes and expectations for gender equality in the next 25 years?

My hope is that women and young girls will have the freedom to choose when to have children, with whom to have sexual relations, when to leave education and when to enter the work industries of their choice. Every woman and young girl deserves to have ownership over their bodies, their health and their future and I want to help create a world that allows this. In the next 25 years I want to see women's rights realised not only in the countries where mothers2mothers works, but across the world. The women's movement has been building momentum in recent years and in the next 25, I believe women will take even more of a leading role within the health sector and beyond.

What keeps you energized and committed as a leader for gender equality?

What keeps me committed to progressing gender equality? Noticing the subtle changes that are proof of positive change. During a recent site visit to Accra in Ghana I met an all-female clinical team who were supported by mothers2mothers Mentor Mothers – trained and professionalised local community health workers who are women living with HIV. Seeing an increase in female professionals and the important role they are playing in not only delivering health and hope but increasing women's visibility and voice is what motivates me each and every day. I've worked at mothers2mothers for over 9 years and this was the very first time I saw an all-female team. It was a statement of how far we have come but also, how far we still have left to go.

What advice would you give younger generations on how to advocate / work for gender equality as they get older?

They don't need any advice. They are less and less accepting of inequalities that currently exist and it is so positive to see younger generations fighting for a more equal future. At mothers2mothers we fully believe in the power of youth-led action which is why so much of our work focuses on children, adolescents and young people, ensuring they have the opportunity to thrive, not just survive.

Who do you look to as an example / role model in the fight for gender equality?

Each and every Mentor Mother I have ever met. They are not famous, they are not world leaders but they are role models within their communities, changing lives and changing perceptions of those around them. They are forming a sisterhood which empowers women living with HIV to take control of their health, defies gender barriers in their communities and above all, helps women thrive, not just survive. It doesn't get much more inspirational than that!

