



Advocating for grandmothers, vulnerable children and youth in Sub-Saharan Africa

Welcome to the Grandmothers Advocacy Network (GRAN)

We hope you find the following information useful and that you become inspired to join us in our advocacy actions in the future.

Who are we? We are volunteers from all across Canada working together to advocate in meaningful and strategic ways for the human rights of grandmothers, vulnerable children and youth of Sub-Saharan Africa.

As our name suggests, GRAN is made up of a strong core of older women but GRAN welcomes and values the partnership and efforts of all.



Malawian grandmother and her grandson orphaned by AIDS

What do we do?



A GRAN member advocating at the United Nations in New York

- We advocate at the local, national and international level for policies and programs that will address the needs of African grandmothers as they strive to sustain their families and communities in the wake of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.
- We educate to raise public awareness and invite engagement.
- We partner with like-minded organizations to amplify our voices and increase our impact.

Our current GRAN campaigns are all in support of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals which Canada and 194 other countries endorsed in 2015. Specifically we work towards:

- Ensuring access to affordable life-saving medicines
- Improving access to quality education for all
- Ending violence against women and girls

GRAN actions can take many forms:

- Participating in study groups and workshops
- Writing to and meeting with Members of Parliament
- Signing and circulating petitions
- Organizing public educational events
- Submitting newspaper articles and Letters to the Editor
- Attending rallies and peaceful demonstrations
- Collaborating with like-minded organizations
- Participating in social media campaigns using Facebook and Twitter.

We really hope you will choose whatever actions suit you best. We all have very different talents and everyone is needed in this important work.



GRAN members writing letters to M.Ps



The Hill Team in Ottawa at the occasion of Malala's visit to Parliament

What kind of GRAN groups are there?

There are many different GRAN groups across the country. Some GRAN groups are completely autonomous, whereas others are in close association with other groups with similar goals in their communities. Some GRAN groups may be in a loose association with, or completely integrated with a Grandmothers to Grandmothers (G2G) group in their area. We celebrate and support all our different groups.

It is important to remember that GRAN groups are completely independent from G2G groups and the Stephen Lewis Foundation, although, of course, many of us are involved with both organizations.



An autonomous GRAN group showing their support for the Orange Campaign

All GRAN groups are grouped into regions and have a Regional Leader who regularly keeps in touch with the groups, encourages their advocacy actions and passes on the monthly *GRAN Update*.

We hope you have managed to connect with a group in your area. If not, please contact us and we will let you know if there is a group near you. Of course you can always form a group yourself.

How do I start a GRAN group?

This can be as simple as you like. You can form a group by just getting together with one or two friends, reading about the issues in the *GRAN Update* and on our website <http://grandmothersadvocacy.org/>, discussing them and then participating in simple actions such as signing a petition or writing a letter. If you do start a new group, do go to our website and let us know.

How is GRAN organized?

GRAN's national organizational structure consists of our Steering Committee, Regional Leaders, Working Groups, and Leadership Team.

Steering Committee: The Steering Committee is our major decision-making body and includes our Regional Leaders, Co-Chairs of Working Groups and members of the Leadership Team. The Steering Committee communicates via a monthly conference call.

Regional Leaders: The Regional Leaders keep in touch with and act as the 'go to' advocacy resource for GRAN groups and members across the country. They represent their regions on the Steering Committee.

Working Groups: Our three national working groups research specific issues, identify advocacy goals, and work with other similarly-oriented civil society organizations. These working groups are: • *Access to Medicines* • *Education for all* • *Ending Violence against Women and Girls*.



A Hill Team member interacting with a Member of Parliament

The Hill Team is another working group and draws its members from the Ottawa region. Members tackle the on-going work of meeting with MPs and policy-makers on the Hill. They also represent GRAN at meetings with Ottawa-based civil society organizations.

Leadership Team: consists of usually 8 members from all across Canada. They are responsible for much of GRAN's day-to-day work and forward planning. The Leadership Team keeps information flowing between the Working Groups and the Steering Committee.

Communications:

GRAN communicates with members across the country by means of our monthly newsletter, the *GRAN Update*, (which is usually sent on to you by your Regional Leader). The website <http://grandmothersadvocacy.org/> is an invaluable source of information on our issues and ongoing actions. In addition, a couple of times a month, direct messages will be sent to you via email that will give you the latest news from GRAN or will invite your participation in a certain action. You can sign on to receive these direct messages via our website.

Once every 2 years we gather together at our “Hello Friends” conference which is a real highlight. We all get together in Ottawa in June for 3 or 4 days of talks, workshops, visits to Parliament and just having fun together. Do not miss this!



GRAN members on the steps of Parliament after attending Question Period during Hello Friends 2013

Why would you want to be involved in GRAN?



We hope as you get more and more involved in GRAN that you will find many benefits. As one member recently shared, “I have found that being involved in GRAN has given new meaning to my life since I retired from the working world. I have really enjoyed learning so many new things – important things like how Parliament works and the rights of older women in Sub-Saharan Africa, to less important things like what the acronym “CCIC” stands for and how to insert photos into a Word document! I have really enjoyed the amazing women I have met along the way whom I now count as my friends. They have always been supportive and encouraging. I hope new members have the same experience.”



We also have so much fun together, and this is at the same time as making the world a better place. Who could beat that!

