

grandmothers
Advocacy Network



Mouvement de soutien des
grands-mères

Advocating for Grandmothers, Vulnerable Children and Youth in Africa

Soutien aux grands-mères, enfants et jeunes vulnérables en Afrique

Annual Report

April 1st, 2016 to March 31st, 2017

Introduction

This annual report is prepared for the 4th Annual General Meeting of GRAN to be held on May 10, 2017 by teleconference at 3:00 pm EDT.

The overall mission of GRAN, which is to advocate in meaningful and strategic ways for the human rights of grandmothers, vulnerable children and youth in sub-Saharan Africa, remains unchanged. We focus our advocacy efforts on three key issues: – access to affordable medicines, ending violence against women and girls and ensuring quality education for all. Increasingly, we strive to highlight the connections between these three issues and integrate them in our campaigns.

The world of international development advocacy has undergone considerable change in the last year. The mandate letter from Prime Minister Trudeau to the Minister of International Development states that the first priority is to “*refocus Canada’s development assistance on helping the poorest and most vulnerable, and supporting fragile states*”. GRAN has responded to this change by supporting the Canadian government in its efforts to meet the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and ensuring that funding is strategic and targets the most vulnerable people.

Our Advocacy Action This Year

Access to Medicines

GRAN continued its opposition to specific clauses in the Trans Pacific Partnership agreement (TPP) which would have made access to affordable medicines for the developing world increasingly difficult. Many letters were sent and visits made to MPs across the country. GRAN tabled a brief before the House of Commons Standing Committee on International Trade. A GRAN member appeared as a witness at the government's public hearing in Saskatoon in April and members spoke at other hearings across the country. Although the TPP seems unlikely to proceed with the new government in the U.S., we remain vigilant. GRAN recently sent a letter to the Ministers of Health and International Trade emphasizing the importance of the UN High Level report on access to medicines and the need to ensure future trade agreements protect the rights of all people to affordable medicines.



GRANS in Saskatoon write letters to their MPs about the TPP

Another major focus this year was our work with the international humanitarian organization Doctors without Borders (MSF), on their "Fair Shot" campaign asking two pharmaceutical companies, Pfizer and GlaxoSmithKline (GSK), to reduce the cost of their pneumonia vaccine for humanitarian organizations and developing countries. We rejoiced when first GSK and then Pfizer agreed to reduce the price to \$9 per child for humanitarian organizations. MSF publicly acknowledged in their official magazine *Dispatches* GRAN's contribution to the success of their campaign. We can be proud of our efforts!



An MSF worker immunizing a child

We also rejoiced at the Canadian government's pledge of \$785 million to the Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and its hosting of the replenishment conference in Montreal last September.

April 1, 2016 – March 31, 2017

In April GRAN was honoured with an invitation to participate in the Civil Society Hearing held at the United Nations in New York as part of the preparatory process towards the high-level meeting on HIV/AIDS. Another milestone for GRAN as we sent our first representative to the UN!

Education

GRAN is developing a campaign to raise awareness of the vital importance of education in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals as we approach the time for the replenishment of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) fund for the 2019 to 2022 period. Julia Gillard (Chair of the Board of the GPE) recently visited Ottawa and GRAN, along with nine other civil society organizations from the Canadian International Education Policy Working Group (CIEPWG), was in attendance to hear her inspiring message.



Victoria GRAN and High school students celebrate after her empowering presentation on education.

In October GRAN sent a letter to the Canadian government, encouraging it to sign on to the “*Safe Schools Declaration*” which is an international political commitment to protect students, teachers and schools from attack in times of armed conflict and to prevent schools from being used for military purposes. We were very pleased in February when Canada became the 57th country to sign onto this agreement.

Ending Violence against Women

The Orange campaign – what a success!

Thanks to GRANs all across the country, 18 cities and communities participated in the campaign to “orange” Canada during the United Nations’ **16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence**. GRAN participants engaged governments at every level and invited other Canadian civil society organizations, community groups and individuals to join in speaking out for gender equality and an end to violence against women, domestically and internationally.



GRANs wore orange, lit up municipal and provincial buildings in orange (four major buildings in Vancouver), and engaged Mayors, Municipal governments, provincial politicians and federal MPs. Official proclamations or statements of support

Vancouver GRANs dress in orange

April 1, 2016 – March 31, 2017

were read in council rooms, legislatures and even the House of Commons. On Dec 6th Anita Vandenberg, MP for Ottawa West, concluded her remarks in the House of Commons with this:



“I applaud the Grandmothers Advocacy Network and many other organizations for their work in ending gender-based violence.”

In addition to raising awareness of Gender-Based Violence, there were many side benefits from the campaign. We created new connections with other community groups as well as municipal, provincial and federal politicians and officials. We built GRAN's profile with the media, the UN Women global campaign and, most importantly, GRAN participants were energized by the success of their actions. We hope to build on this success in the coming year.

The Toronto sign lit up in orange for the 16 days of activism against gender based violence.

Child, Early and Forced Marriage

The Violence Against Women Working Group provided input this year to the Girls Not Brides strategy consultation for 2017 – 2020. GRAN, along with other CSOs, participated in a meeting with Global Affairs Canada outlining the overall approach and content of the Resolution on Child and Early Forced Marriage. Throughout the year considerable efforts were made to highlight this issue on social media.

Hill Team

The Hill Team is a Working Group of GRAN, based in the Ottawa/Gatineau Region, responsible for the overall advocacy work related to MP and Senator visits when the regional GRAN membership has not been able to make contact. Members are also responsible for nurturing relationships with like-minded national NGOs. Direction for action is taken from the Leadership Team and the GRAN Working Groups.

The government change in October 2016 has meant a change in the work of the Hill Team. We have concentrated on making our presence known to the new government members and introducing our issues. This is a difficult task as the MPs were too busy with their new portfolios to meet with us individually, and we found our most effective contact was through public or NGO sponsored meetings where we were able to make contact and have short discussions with MPs responsible for our issues. We have also developed our relationships with NGOs working in international development with a focus on Africa. Records of these meetings are available.

Future work will involve creating a better record of the work being done across the country and forming a closer relationship with the Working Groups.

Report on Older Women



Speaking at the “Older Women Count” conference

This year an important report was completed by a small group of GRANs. It provides valuable information on the situation and challenges faced by older women in sub-Saharan Africa, organized according to 5 key pillars of action: (1) education and lifelong learning, (2) health, (3) freedom from violence, (4) economic security and social protection, (5) human rights, dignity and full participation. A public version of the report on older women and summaries of the 5 pillars of action are being prepared. We anticipate that the findings and recommendations in this report will underlie much of the work of GRAN in the future.

In December GRAN, in conjunction with the University of Ottawa and the International Longevity Centre, organized an “Older Women Count” conference in Ottawa. Patty Hajdu, who was then the Minister of the Status of Women, gave a motivating address and the day was spent discussing the rights of older women both in sub-Saharan Africa and Canada.



Direct messages: This Fall we started a new way of communicating with our participants which has been a great success. A couple of times a month, an email message goes out to all our participants which encourages a particular action, celebrates some good news or relates advocacy stories from across the globe. These messages are often linked to an action such as signing a petition or forwarding a letter - which can be done by one click. The action can then be shared via social media. Direct messaging allows us to contact our supporters quickly with actions to be done easily and instantly.

Website: Our website continues to be our most important external communication tool. It is kept up to date by our very able website team. They have been busy revamping our home page and making sure we are kept up to date on world events by regular posting of news posts.

While, at this time, we do not have the funds to have a fully bilingual website or email communications, GRAN does make every effort to make our online printable resources available in both English and French. We currently do this by relying on the support of a small group of volunteer translators. We are very grateful for their time and dedication.

Update: Our monthly newsletter, the GRAN Update is our internal communication tool which is sent out to all our participants. It contains news on the work of the three working groups, advocacy news, stories from around the world and educational pieces.

Messages from GRAN to politicians: The GRAN co-chairs frequently sign letters to Canadian politicians concerning our issues. They also add their names to letters written by our partners and associates if their focus coincides with that of GRAN. Examples are the messages sent regarding the global GAG rule, the Safe Schools declaration, future trade agreements and access to medicines. GRAN also made a submission to the Department of Global Affairs as part of their policy review which will shape the policy and funding of Global Affairs for the next 5 years.

Social Media: We use Social Media, primarily Twitter and Facebook, as an important advocacy tool for our campaigns, amplifying messages and supporting partners. GRAN's Twitter account now has 840 followers, including many GRANs of course, but also many like-minded organizations, humanitarians and social justice leaders and our Facebook page has 157 "likes". We are following more than 1,000 people and organizations, so our Twitter feed is a rich source of news, information and ideas. We spread the word about MSF's "A Fair Shot" campaign and helped pressure Pharma to start reducing prices. We have kept the need for education funding in front of politicians and the media, along with key coalition partners who support the Global Partnership for Education. Facebook was extremely effective in spreading the word about the Orange Campaign, sharing the many "orange the world" initiatives across Canada to end violence against women.

Aeroplan

November was our Aeroplan month and we are pleased to report that we raised a total of 144,087 miles. This will help GRAN participants attend national and international conferences, help GRAN groups bring in speakers for special events, and facilitate the annual face-to-face meeting of GRAN's Leadership Team.

Fundraising

February was our internal fund raising month and, with the help of a direct message and the website, we raised over \$6000. This will really help with our conference call costs and travel expenses. Many thanks to all who donated.

Future Directions

Growing the Grassroots

The need to engage and grow the grassroots was a common theme in meetings between the Leadership Team and the Working Groups throughout the year. It is hoped that the introduction of direct messaging and improvements to the website will make it easier for GRAN participants and others to identify with our issues and take action with like-minded people. Embracing advocacy for the rights of older women as a cross cutting theme may also attract new participants. Regional meetings are being planned across the country this year to encourage the engagement of the grassroots. As with many volunteer organizations, and particularly considering our demographic, attracting and retaining GRAN participants will remain a challenge.

Succession Planning

Concurrent with the challenges of growing the grassroots is the need for more robust succession planning to recruit regional leaders and new members of the working groups. The Leadership Team and the Steering Committee are grappling with this issue and will be working on strategies to encourage participants to take on leadership roles.

Hello Friends 2018

Nothing is as energizing and inspiring as our biennial face-to-face meetings! This year a decision was taken to postpone Hello Friends until 2018 as Ottawa and the Ottawa GRANs will be taken up with numerous Sesquicentennial events.

However, planning is already underway to make Hello Friends, scheduled for June 2018 in Ottawa, a memorable event. Five years will have passed since we set our advocacy goals and directions at Hello Friends 2013, a perfect time for review, reflection and renewal. We will also have a better measure of the Trudeau government and the extent to which it is putting its commitment to a feminist foreign policy into action.

Financial Sustainability

GRAN is powered by the passion, experience and expertise of a strong core of older Canadian women. Many of us are grandmothers ourselves. We have no paid staff. We are incorporated in Canada as a Non-Government Organization (NGO) (#813026-4) but do not have charitable status, as our work is 100% advocacy.

GRAN needs both core funding (website maintenance, teleconferencing) and project funding (symposiums and campaigns) to support our important work in our three advocacy areas.

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While GRAN participants responded generously to our February 2017 fundraising drive, donating over \$6,000, we hope to access additional sources of funds on an ongoing basis. To that end, a Fundraising Committee will continue to work on strategies to attract corporate and institutional donors.

Trip to Uganda January 2018

This amazing opportunity is being organized for us by GIVE International. This trip will afford GRAN participants the opportunity to learn first-hand from the grandmothers themselves their advocacy priorities and to witness their amazing resilience and fortitude in the face of the AIDS pandemic.

Uganda is a landlocked country surrounded by historical and continuing conflicts in a number of its neighbours. The country has also had to contend with the brutality of the Lord's Resistance Army in the north which led to mass migration to the south.



From the perspective of GRAN's mission to advocate for grandmothers, vulnerable children and youth in sub-Saharan Africa, Uganda provides much for us to learn. There are many outstanding grandmother-focused organizations such as Phoebe Education Fund for Orphans (PEFO) and Uganda has developed some exemplary practices in the campaign it has waged against HIV/AIDS.

Appendix

Leadership Team

Hilary Elliott (Ottawa, ON) co-chair
Heather Fraser (Vancouver, BC) co-chair
Bonnie Johnson (Ottawa, ON)
Jenny Neal (Saskatoon, SK)
Ruth Buckinger (Sackville, NB)
Janet Siddall (Whitehorse, YT)
Irene Clarke (Oakville, ON)
Pat Dolan (Gatineau, QC)

<p>Access to Medicines Working Group Marilyn Coolen (co-chair) Angela Quinlan (co-chair) Bunny Keeley JoAnn Mulhern Ruth Evans Pat Evans Pat Dolan Ginger Shaw Sue McKenna Irene Clarke (LT liaison)</p> <p>Violence against Women Working Group Janet Siddall (co-chair and LT liaison) Vacant (co-chair) Lynne Kent Louise Bergeron Heather Fraser Myrtle Blinn (Hill Team) Colleen Stefanich (Girls not Brides liaison)</p> <p>Education Working Group Valerie Wright (co-chair) Ann Frost (co-chair) Roz Johns Phyllis Webster Diane Woods Sharon Swanson Jenny Neal (LT liaison)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Regional Leaders:</p> <p>British Columbia Pauline Barrett Anne Young Merran Proctor Sharon Swanson Rita Taenzer Alberta Ann Rycroft Prairies Jenny Neal Frances Molaro Atlantic Sue McKenna Marilyn Coolen</p>	<p>Older Women Group Peggy Edwards (lead) Pauline Barrett Louise Bergeron Phyllis Webster</p> <p>Hill Team Bonnie Johnson Bunny Keeley Diane Woods Janet Wilkinson Hilary Elliott Myrtle Blinn</p> <p>Website Committee Pat Evans Marilyn Coolen Ruth Buckinger Daniel Hegarty Annie Creighton</p> <p>Volunteer Translators Mia Overduin (Coordinator) Ruth Buckinger (Coordinator) Jeannette Landry Lina Halle Suzanne Dufresne</p> <p>Ontario Valerie Wright Annie Creighton Linda Kulkarni Angela Quinlan Peggy Edwards Gaye-Francis Alexander Irene Clarke Joyce Nicholson Sharon Graham Suzanne Brooks Quebec Pat Winston</p>
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