



Advocating for the human rights of older women
Défense des droits de la personne des femmes âgées

Annual Report

April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023

The Grandmothers Advocacy Network (GRAN) is a nonpartisan network of volunteers who advocate in Canada and internationally for program and policy changes that will promote and protect the human rights of vulnerable women and communities in the Global South, with a specific focus on older women, children, youth, and gender-diverse persons in sub-Saharan Africa.

Message from GRAN Co-Chairs

The Grandmothers Advocacy Network has been very busy this past year raising our voices in support of women in the Global South, and in particular, older women in sub-Saharan Africa. We have educated ourselves on issues of health equity and food security and have helped to raise awareness in our communities. We have reached out to our members of Parliament, and to the Prime Minister and other parliamentarians, offering up solutions to the multiple intersecting crises that threaten the lives of the world's most vulnerable. We have strengthened long-standing partnerships with like-minded organizations and have built new ones. We have rallied in the streets in support of youth climate leaders and local environmental groups. We are making a difference, although the pace of progress sometimes seems agonizingly slow. We acknowledge that advocacy is a marathon and not a sprint!

GRAN's accomplishments, summed up here, are astonishing when we consider that ours is a completely volunteer movement, with members widely spread across the country. Without the passion and commitment of our members, none of this would be possible. We are proud of our organization and the important work for justice and human rights we undertake, and grateful for the community we have built together. A deep and sincere thank you to each GRAN member.

Pat Dolan and Linda Kulkarni

GRAN Co-Chairs

GRAN's Advocacy Framework

GRAN's Advocacy Framework – A Human Rights Approach



In 2022, the GRAN Advocacy Framework was developed to highlight the organizational values and principles that guide our work. The principles related to age justice, climate justice, economic justice, gender justice, and social justice inform our advocacy. At the centre of our concerns are older women, many of whom are grandmothers. Older women are among the world's most vulnerable and face multiple challenges related to traditional gender norms, economic insecurity, and lack of access to health services and education. And yet, women also hold the solutions to many of the challenges facing the world today. We are community leaders, teachers, care providers and food producers. GRAN amplifies the voices of older women, supports community-led solutions, and partners with like-minded organizations in efforts to make the world a better place for all.

Health Equity – All-of-GRAN Campaign April - September 2022

As a result of GRAN's Future Directions organizational review in 2021, we made the decision to focus on one major "all-of-GRAN" advocacy campaign each year. This all-of-GRAN campaign would invite the input of each of the GRAN Watch Groups and seek to engage GRAN members across the country.

The first all-of-GRAN campaign, **Health Equity: Fair Global Access to Lifesaving Medicines/Vaccines** was undertaken from April to September of 2022. This was an important and timely campaign. The COVID-19 pandemic was having a devastating impact on HIV, TB, and malaria programs in sub-Saharan Africa due to disruptions in health services and supply chains. And Canada's commitment to support access and delivery of COVID vaccines to low-income countries was critically important to save lives.

The pandemic had a particularly devastating effect on women, with widespread reports of increased domestic violence, poverty, and food insecurity. The Health Equity campaign was a collaborative effort with partners that included Results Canada, ONE Canada, Global Fund Advocates Network, STOP TB Partnership, and Global Citizen. Collectively we advocated for a 30% increase in Canada’s contribution to the Global Fund to Defeat HIV, TB and Malaria.

Learning about issues is a key component of GRAN’s advocacy, helping us develop deeper knowledge and greater awareness of key opportunities where advocacy can make a difference. The Health Equity campaign was launched with a learning event -- “COVID-19 Vaccine Apartheid: its Roots and Consequences” -- for which GRAN extends deep appreciation to our guest speaker Dr. Madhukar Pai of McGill University. Appreciation is also extended to Dr. Edward of Uganda, Dr. Jane Jere-Mwafulirwa from Malawi, and Dr. Mtande from Kenya for meeting with the campaign team to facilitate an in-depth understanding of health care delivery in their countries.

As the campaign got underway, GRANs across the country stepped up to take action for health equity. Thank you to everyone who wrote letters, signed petitions, took part in rallies, and met with parliamentarians and MPs.

A big shout out to the Greater Vancouver GRANs who delivered a letter to Minister Sajjan’s office and later had a productive discussion with him about the Global Fund and Canada’s overseas development work at his annual barbeque in his riding of Vancouver South.



GV GRAN’s Gail Mullan, Heather Fraser, Pauline Barrett, Ginger Shaw, and Colleen Stefanich at Minister Sajjan’s constituency office delivering their letter



GRANs Lynne Latulippe, Sheila Smolkin, and Cathy Thompson at the Toronto Pride Parade, along with granddaughters of friends

The Pride Parades in Toronto and Ottawa also provided key opportunities to get the message out regarding the Global Fund. Many thanks to the Toronto and Ottawa GRANs who participated in these events.

Other Health Equity advocacy actions included:

- Letters to the Editor during World Immunization Week;
- Letters to the Prime Minister, the Finance Minister, and the Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee;
- Participation in the Results Canada Week of Action May 30 to June 3 that included meetings with parliamentarians;
- Participation in ONE Canada's *Swarm the Hill* event to flood the Prime Minister's office with calls in support of the Global Fund's efforts to end malaria.

The Health Equity campaign was a resounding success! In September GRANs across the country celebrated Canada's \$1.2 billion pledge to the Global Fund, the figure we had been advocating for, representing a 30% increase from Canada's previous contribution. Through the work of the Global Fund, these dollars will go to treatment and prevention interventions for TB, HIV, and malaria and to building resilient and sustainable health systems in more than 100 countries.

Right to Food -- All-of-GRAN Campaign 2023

The global hunger crisis was chosen in October 2022 as the focus for the second all-of-GRAN campaign.



Hleketani Community Garden | Photo credit: Elizabeth Vibert

According to the World Food Programme (WFP), we are now facing a global food crisis of unprecedented proportions, the largest in modern history. Millions are at risk of worsening hunger if urgent action is not taken. In 2021, one in every five people in Africa was facing hunger. In the last year, moderate or severe food insecurity increased the most in Africa, the region with the highest prevalence of food insecurity at this level of severity.

GRAN recognizes access to adequate food as an inherent human right. The right to food is not about charity, but about ensuring that all people have the capacity to feed themselves in dignity. For this right to be fully realized, food must be available, accessible, adequate, and sustainable. Chronic hunger has brutal and widespread repercussions on the lives of millions of people, especially people who are already the most vulnerable: women, the very young and the very old, those living in poverty, and especially those living in the Global South.

Leadership for the campaign has been provided by a group of twenty GRANs from across the country, comprising representatives from Watch Groups, regional GRAN groups, and individual GRAN volunteers. The nine-member Design Team is charged with developing the advocacy plan and campaign resources, building partnerships, engaging the membership, and organizing learning events. The Consultation Team (eleven members) provides guidance on the focus of the campaign, setting priorities, creating resources, and enhancing engagement of GRANs across the country.



Members of GRAN's Right to Food Design and Consultation Teams

It is anticipated that the Right to Food campaign will continue through all of 2023.

Accomplishments to date include:

- *Small Sips*, short informative messages sent weekly to GRAN members to raise awareness of key aspects of food insecurity;
- Background documents on the *Right to Food*, and *Hunger in Canada*;
- Two learning events:
 - *Global Hunger and Canada's Response*, co-hosted by GRAN, the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, and ONE Canada; and
 - *Global Food Justice? Decolonizing the Paths Forward*, with Dr. Elizabeth Vibert, University of Victoria.

The first stage of the Right to Food campaign focused on advocating for an increase to international assistance in the 2023 Federal Budget. GRAN joined *Bigger Than Our Borders* partner organizations in an open letter to Minister Freeland, collaborated with the Canadian Foodgrains Bank with letters to the Minister of Finance, and sent Letters to the Editor of local and national newspapers.



Photo credit: World Vision

Unfortunately, in this case, our collective advocacy efforts were not successful. The federal budget, announced in early April 2023, brought a decrease of \$1.3 billion in international assistance, leaving the international development community very concerned. But not deterred, GRAN advocacy continues for an increase in international assistance funding, as well as for increased allocation of existing funding to food security.

Access to Medicines

Access to essential medicines is a fundamental element of the Human Right to Health. Advocating for access to affordable life-saving medicines has been at the core of GRAN's mandate since our beginning.

The Access to Medicines Watch Group provided leadership to the Health Equity campaign, a mammoth task for which the organization is very grateful. In addition to that major undertaking, other advocacy throughout the year included:

- Supporting the efforts of the Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) Access Campaign and amplifying their reporting on the continuing presence of Ebola, polio, tuberculosis, and malaria in parts of sub-Saharan Africa (sSA), the impact of natural disasters on access to regular health care, and concerns over the management of non-communicable disease such as diabetes.
- Raising awareness of the health consequences of inadequate access to food, childhood malnutrition, and the ongoing cycle of poverty and inequality within families, communities, and countries and the disproportionate impact on women and girls.

Climate Justice

Globally, extreme weather events are being experienced with increased frequency and intensity. Many countries in the Global South have experienced the worst of these events, including the fourth year of failed rains and drought across the Horn of Africa, and flooding in Pakistan, Malawi, and Madagascar. These events have taken lives, destroyed crops, and resulted in mass internal migrations.

Countries in the Global South identified reparations for Loss and Damages as a priority issue for the COP27 Climate Change Conference that was held in November 2022 in Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt. GRAN amplified the voices of our allies at Climate Action Network Canada (CAN-Rac). After decades of collective advocacy by lower-income countries and small island states, supported by the voices of international civil society, a Loss and Damage Fund was successfully established at the end of COP27. The fund aims to provide financial assistance to nations most vulnerable and impacted by the effects of climate change. However, this is just a first step and much work remains.



GRANs Sandra Stec and Stella Val at the Fridays for Future March, Ottawa



GRANs Audrey Prendergast, Phyllis Webster, Liz Dill, Anne Young, and JoAnn Mulhern march in Victoria at the Old Growth Forest protest.

Other areas of climate justice focus included:

- Advocating, along with our allies at the Canadian Coalition for Climate Change and Development, for Canada to contribute its fair share to international climate finance, including more funding to climate adaptation and a higher percentage of funding to grants rather than loans;
- Collaborating with the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, with a learning event in October on global hunger, and letters to Ministers Sajjan and Guilbeault, encouraging increased support from Canada for food security;
- Support at community and youth-led rallies for action to address the climate crisis and build sustainable healthy environments.

Education

When the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 to be a pandemic on March 11, 2020, few could have foreseen the catastrophic effects the virus would have on the education of the world's children. As late as March 2022, UNICEF reported that 23 countries, home to an estimated 405 million schoolchildren, had not yet fully reopened their schools. There are many children, especially adolescent girls, who may never return to school. Progress towards the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) for education has been set back significantly.



Photo credit: Canadian International Education Policy Working Group

In September of 2022, the United Nations convened the Transforming Education Summit in response to the global crisis in education. GRANs wrote cards and e-mails to Prime Minister Trudeau asking him to attend. The aim of the Summit was to mobilize political ambition, action, solutions, and solidarity to transform education, and to revitalize national and global finances and resources to achieve SDG 4: to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”.

With the education funding for girls, refugees, and displaced learners that was secured at Charlevoix in 2018 coming to an end, the federal 2023 budget was a critical opportunity for Canada to build on this legacy and sustain hard-won progress towards improving access to quality education for the world's most vulnerable learners. In January, GRANs, in

collaboration with partners from the Canadian International Education Policy Working Group (CIEPWG), signed a petition and took to social media calling on the Government of Canada to fulfill their promise to increase international assistance, including dedicating funding to global education.

In February 2023, we celebrated as Canada pledged \$87.5 million over four years (2023 to 2026) to Education Cannot Wait (ECW), to support millions of crisis-affected children in accessing quality education. However, we were greatly disappointed when the 2023 federal budget included a decrease of 15% in funds dedicated to international assistance. We are left wondering about Canada’s support for education for the world’s most vulnerable.

Ending Violence Against Women

For the past six years, GRANs across the country have participated in the United Nations *Orange the World Campaign: 16 Days of Activism to End Gender-Based Violence*. The campaign has been an annual global event since 1991. Once again, this year GRANs supported the campaign at the community level. We lit up communities across the



GRAN Gail Mullan with Mayor’s Proclamation New Westminster BC

country in orange and in purple. Orange is the colour chosen by the United Nations for this global event, as a symbol of a brighter future for women around the world. For the past few years some GRAN groups have chosen to use the colour purple instead, in recognition of the growing significance of the Orange Shirt campaign in Canada honouring Indigenous children and acknowledging the history and impact of the residential school system. The Ottawa/Gatineau GRANs used purple this year in solidarity with the Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women.



Ottawa/Gatineau GRANs, OCTEVAW, and Ottawa MP’s Chandra Arya (L) and Anita Vandenberg (R)

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

– Margaret Mead –

Mining Justice

Widespread and well-documented human rights abuses continue to be associated with the activities of many Canadian mining companies abroad, abuses that include gender-based violence, seizure of land and water, serious illness and death resulting from toxic chemicals in the air, land, and water, injuries and death of peaceful protesters, and destruction of culture and the social fabric of communities.



Graphic courtesy of Canadian Network for Corporate Accountability

GRAN advocacy focussed on the following three key pieces of legislation:

- Bill C-226, an Act respecting the development of a national strategy to assess, prevent and address environmental racism and to advance environmental justice;
- Bill C-262, an Act respecting the corporate responsibility to prevent, address and remedy adverse impacts on human rights occurring in relation to business activities conducted abroad (frequently referred to as mandatory human rights and environmental due diligence legislation);
- Bill C-263, an Act to establish the Office of the Commissioner for Responsible Business Conduct Abroad -- This act would empower the Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise (CORE) by granting them the powers to investigate allegations of abuse and compel witnesses and documents, powers that were removed from the original mandate.



MP Laurel Collins receives petition from GRAN Anne Young on human rights and due diligence legislation.

Advocacy actions included letters to MPs in support of the three bills, in collaboration with Kairos, and a parliamentary paper petition in support of Bill 262. We also joined the United Steel Workers in their postcard campaign supporting Bill 262, with messages sent to Minister of Labour Seamus O'Regan, highlighting the impact of low wages and economic insecurity on hunger and food security.

GRAN continues to amplify the voices of people impacted by human rights abuses perpetrated by Canadian extractive corporations abroad, including the lawsuit filed in the Ontario Supreme Court against Barrick Gold, and the ongoing exploitation of Indigenous people and environmental destruction in the Okavango Delta region by Canadian company ReconAfrica.

A UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons (CROP)

A Convention on the Rights of Older Persons would provide legal protection for the human rights of older women, those who are the focus of GRAN advocacy. This is a crucial international instrument for the protection of older persons' rights and GRAN continues to follow progress towards it.

In May 2022, GRAN hosted a learning event with HelpAge Canada Executive Director Gregor Sneddon. Gregor spoke of his experiences visiting HelpAge projects in Ethiopia and Kenya. He shared discussions he had with African grandmothers, providing us with insight into their hopes and challenges. In October, GRANS joined in celebration of the 32nd UN International Day of Older Persons. The theme -- the resilience and contributions of older women -- was highlighted in a webinar attended by many.

In anticipation of the thirteenth session of the UN Open-ended Working Group on Ageing scheduled for April 2023, GRANS were invited to join the Global Alliance for the Rights of Older People (GAROP) in their second virtual Global Rally, held from February 27 - March 5, 2023. The Goals of the Global Rally were to activate more advocates, including non-governmental agencies and all levels of governments, to support further work on older people's rights in the UN Human Rights Council. As a member of GAROP, GRAN will continue to support the work of the Open-ended Working Group to draft a new UN Convention on the Rights of Older Peoples.



Advocacy Planning Team

The Advocacy Planning Team (APT) provides a support role to the advocacy work of the organization. This past year, the Team coordinated the consultative process among interested GRANS in the selection of the two all-of-GRAN campaigns: *Health Equity* and *The Right to Food*. Representatives of the APT joined the two campaign teams to provide input on advocacy actions and to contribute to the all-of-GRAN perspective.

GRAN values partnerships and alliances with like-minded organizations, and the opportunities this opens up to collaborate in shared advocacy efforts. In January, GRAN collaborated with the Stephen Lewis Foundation in a learning event on advocacy which provided a great opportunity for dialogue among GRANS and G2G groups. In February, Peggy Edwards, co-founder of GRAN, participated in a panel discussion hosted by the British Columbia Council for International Cooperation during International Development Week. Collaboration with Cooperation Canada and Bigger Than Our Borders was a key component in GRAN advocacy for an increase in international assistance in the 2023 Federal Budget.

Web Team

In April 2022, the web team undertook a complete refresh of the GRAN membership/ mailing list, asking all GRAN members to re-register. Now, instead of just an anonymous list of email addresses, our new membership list comprises names, cities, provinces, and postal codes. We are delighted! We now have a precise picture of where our members are across the country, and the information collected also gives us strategic options for targeting specific MPs and Ministers for future letter-writing campaigns and meetings as needed. We are grateful to all GRAN members who took the time to fill out the registration form to help us accomplish this membership list refresh.

Throughout 2022 and into 2023, with the help of the Coordinating Team, Watch Groups, and the Steering Committee, many of GRAN's online resources and web pages were updated to reflect our new organizational structure, vision, and mission. We are delighted to be nearing completion of this year-long "Spring Clean"!

Treasurer's Message

A huge thank you to all who supported the Grandmothers Advocacy Network this year. GRAN neither seeks nor receives external funding, so the support we receive from our members is critical to our operations. And we know individual GRANs support the organization in many ways, from covering printing costs and postage stamps to direct financial contributions. And while our revenues were down again this year, so were our expenses, leaving us in a positive balance at year end. (See the Annual Financial Statement which follows.)

Just a reminder that a lovely way to honour someone on a special occasion is through a tribute donation to GRAN. On the GRAN web site, click on **DONATE** in the upper right corner and scroll down to **DONATIONS AS GIFTS**. E-transfers, cheques, and payment by credit card via Pay Pal are all gratefully accepted.

A very special thank you to our Financial Assistant, Mary Jane Sterne, for all her time and work in keeping GRAN's financial records up to date and for preparing the Financial Report. Her contribution is invaluable to GRAN.



GRAN Financial Statement for Year Ending March 31, 2023

Balance Beginning of Fiscal 2022/23	\$22,322*
Revenue 2022/23	
General Donations	1,478
February Campaign Donations	4,815
Donations as Gifts	<u>150</u>
Total Revenue:	\$6,443
Expenses 2022/23	
Zoom	421
Website Hosting, Support, Action Network	2,117
Organizational Memberships	866
Meetings/Conference/Working Groups/Face to Face	85
Training/Learning Events	656
Postage/Office Supplies	152
Archives	0
Miscellaneous	<u>519</u>
Total Expenses:	\$5,278
Net Income (Loss) 2022/223	<u>\$1,165</u>
Balance End of Fiscal 2022/23	\$23,487*

**Does not include \$4404 surplus from 2018 GRAN Hello Friends! conference.*

Financial Report prepared by Mary Jane Sterne, GRAN Financial Assistant, April 19, 2023