



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

GRAN Update - March 2024

Hello Friends! – Registration is Open!

We are very much looking forward to welcoming you all to our national gathering, *Hello Friends! 2024* taking place May 13-15 in Toronto. In addition to it being an in-person event, we are excited this year to be able to offer livestreaming of some of the sessions via Zoom for those not able to be with us in person. Those who have attended this gathering in the past know that it provides a rich opportunity for friendship, learning, and reigniting our shared passion for social justice.



Sally Armstrong, our keynote speaker

We always come away inspired, strengthened, and energized. This is a terrific opportunity for those new to GRAN to learn more about our movement and forge new friendships, and for long-timers to renew ties with GRANs from other regions and learn new things too!



Ama Deawuo, SeedChange

We are sure to be inspired by human rights activist and journalist, Sally Armstrong, and we'll learn about the farming expertise of African grandmothers from Ama Deawuo, Executive Director of SeedChange. A representative from Doctors Without Borders will share insights about their work around the world. Don't miss this event! Everything you need to register can be found [here](#).

Fantastic February Fundraising!



Wow, GRANs! Our February fundraising brought in more than \$6,100, generously above and beyond our goal of \$5000. As a volunteer organization that relies entirely on donations to fund our work, we are so very appreciative of your belief in and commitment to the advocacy work that we do together.

Many, many thanks to you all for your generosity!

Access to Medicines Watch Group

We recognize that malnutrition caused by food insecurity is serious and can be fatal. It also puts infants at high risk for TB. The humanitarian crises around the world - from Myanmar to the Ukraine, Gaza, Sudan, and many more countries – all underscore the very immediate linkages between armed conflict, displacement, disease, hunger and limited access to healthcare.

Despite the positive trends, the world is severely off track from meeting TB elimination targets, and TB remains a leading global cause of death. In 2022 alone, an estimated 10.6 million people fell ill with TB and 1.3 million people died. Most at risk are malnourished infants in remote areas in Canada and in low-income countries globally. [Click here](#) to read about the Global Fund launch of new grants to accelerate progress against HIV, TB and malaria.



Photo credit: The Global Fund

The World Malaria Report, the World Health Organization's regular update on the status of malaria worldwide, reveals a global increase in the incidence of the disease in 2022. In addition to the challenges associated with the increased resistance of parasites to antimalarial drugs, the changing climate poses multiple risks to progress against malaria, particularly in vulnerable regions. Progress is being made, however, thanks to the rollout of two new malaria vaccines. Read more [here](#).

Right to Food Campaign



Thank you to everyone who sent postcards to Minister of International Development, Ahmed Hussen. Well over 160 postcards have now been sent to him by GRANS and friends of GRAN. At least 40 postcards have been sent by GRANS to other parliamentarians, and one postcard was sent to the Secretary-General of the United Nations! **Reminder:** If you haven't sent your postcard to the Minister, or wish to encourage people in your community networks to do so, there's still time. If you have sent and/or distributed postcards, but forgot to let us know, please tell us by sending a quick email to info@grandmothersadvocacy.org so we can keep accurate track of our advocacy efforts.

The Right to Food advocacy action plan continues through the end of April, at which time we will reassess our go-forward plan. We have begun to gather information for the evaluation of the campaign. We have also begun to explore other issues which pertain to the Right to Food that may inform GRAN's next campaign, including access to safe water, industrial agriculture, greenwashing, and fair trade.

Did you know that the Sahel region is one of the most structurally vulnerable and food-insecure regions in Africa? The World Food Programme and its partners, with its Sahel Integrated Resilience Programme, have seen success in their work across five countries: Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger. This initiative works with communities in restoring land, building community infrastructure, promoting education, improving nutrition and health, and creating jobs for women and young people, with over 290,000 hectares of land rehabilitated by Sahelians since 2018. [Click here](#) to view an inspiring 12-minute video.

Climate Justice Watch Group

The most significant impacts of climate change are experienced by people and countries who have done the least to cause it. [Here](#) is a clear and visually engaging 10-minute video that shows which countries are most responsible and need to do the most to decrease greenhouse gas emissions. Spoiler alert – Canada has some heavy lifting to do.

New global research shows that 86 percent of those surveyed agree that people in their country should try to fight global warming and 89 percent say they want more action from their governments. These results are based on a survey of more than 130,000 people in 125 countries around the world. Interestingly, the same study found that people around the globe underestimate how much their fellow humans support climate action. The lesson here is for us to talk more about this issue knowing that many people are open to learning about actions to tackle the challenges posed by climate change.

On the home front, a recent report from Shift Action reveals that Canadian pension funds are dragging their heels on climate change. The report notes that while some pensions made very modest improvements over the previous year, on the whole, Canadian pensions continue to act as if the climate crisis isn't happening, and as though their considerable investments in the fossil fuel sector weren't exacerbating the crisis. [Click here](#) to take action by sending a letter to the manager of the Canada Pension Plan and/or your pension fund.

Education Watch Group

The whole world is suffering from a lack of teachers, and sub-Saharan Africa is one of the areas of most concern. The world needs 44 million more teachers if education is to be provided to every child, according to new figures from UNESCO. Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for a third of the global teacher shortage and needs 15 million teachers to meet the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of ensuring primary and secondary education by 2030.

Audrey Azoulay, UNESCO's Director-General said: *"Teachers play a vital role in our societies, yet this profession is facing a major vocation crisis. Some regions of the world lack candidates. Other regions face a very high dropout rate during the first few years of work. In both cases, the answer is the same: we must better value, better train, and better support teachers."*

The report said there were problems globally, including in rich countries, with teachers having to deal with high stress levels, lack of supplies, poor leadership, and low salaries. In sub-Saharan Africa, there are the added problems of climate change such as floods, drought, famine, and the growing tensions of political instability and war. The shortage of teacher training colleges and the fees required to attend add further difficulties to the shortage of new teachers.

Good sources to explore the issue further include the World Education Blog [here](#) and an article from *The Guardian* on the pressing need for more teachers [here](#).



Photo courtesy EKO.org

Mining Justice Watch Group

Every day we receive another disturbing message about the negative impacts of mining, both globally and locally, on human rights, on the environment, and on the health and well-being of communities. Among those most impacted are Indigenous communities and those living in the Global South. Sadly, a large majority -- 75% -- of the world's mining companies are based in Canada.

How do we decide where to put our energy when our GRAN "human resources" are limited? We look to our partners. We join forces with like-minded individuals and groups. With this in mind, we are excited about strengthening our collaboration with a Vancouver Island-based mining justice organization, [Mining Justice Action Committee](#) and focusing most of our energies on the issue of Deep-Sea Mining as we prepare for [Ocean Week 2024](#) June 1-9.

Deep-sea mining has the potential for catastrophic impacts, but there is still time, as Margaret Mead would say for, "... a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens [to] change the world"! You can learn more and sign the petition against deep-sea mining [here](#). Check out [this link](#) to learn more about the problems with deep-sea mining.

Round-up of Activities of Regional GRAN Groups



GRANs Anne Young, Sylvia Krogh, a Raging Granny, JoAnn Mulhern, Audrey Prendergast, Diane Scaletta, Shirley Swift, and Phyllis Webster

Victoria GRANs -- For various reasons we have not met in person for a long time. In February we had a Zoom meeting and as part of the meeting we discussed [Small Sip #20](#). Phyllis Webster gave us a presentation on International Humanitarian Law, and we had a very lively discussion.

For International Women's Day several of us met at City Hall. Many organizations were represented, and we had panel discussions and performances. It was a very inspiring event. Victoria GRAN had a table with posters and information and we were able to get some more GRAN Right to Food postcards signed!

Greater Van GRANs -- A representative of the [Harvest Project](#) spoke about their programs at the February meeting. He explained that patrons can enter a 2-year program that includes counselling, "rent bank" support if needed, a chance to shop (free) for food and clothing, nutritionist support, tutoring, art

therapy, career coaching and budgeting lessons. Our group is working on our second batch of 100 Right to Food postcards and meeting with MPs. [Results Vancouver](#) has invited Greater Van GRANS to a “Stop TB” event on March 24. Andy Harrington, Executive Director of Canadian Foodgrains Bank is scheduled to speak at the March meeting.

Alberta Advograms will be presenting the work of GRAN to the [Ujamaa Grandmas](#) as well as working with the Stephen Lewis Foundation (SLF) to have a focus on GRAN at the Alberta Gathering of SLF groups in September.

Winnipeg GRANS emailed all eight MPs from the Winnipeg region to raise the issue of global hunger. The Liberal MP for Winnipeg North (Kevin Lamoureux) sent a response and Regional Leader Joy Dupont will meet with him online for a more detailed discussion about GRAN’s concerns for women and children in the Global South on March 27th. The local Right to Food initiative continues with regular donations of reading materials to the Oak Table (Serves meals to people living with food insecurity). The Winnipeg Millennium Library now supports this initiative, offering discarded books.



Sandy Milakovic, Golden Horseshoe GRANS

Golden Horseshoe GRANS attended the Oakville International Women’s Day dinner and set up a display. There was significant interest by those in attendance and almost 30 Right to Food postcards were signed with additional suggested messages written on the postcards to Minister Hussen.

Regional Leader, Sandy Malikovic met with her MP (Charles Sousa) to discuss global hunger and ask for his support in approaching Minister Hussen. He was quite interested and supportive and actually asked what he could do.

Ottawa-Gatineau GRANS -- [Results Canada](#) invited GRANS based in and around Ottawa to their Parliamentary Reception on March 19th in advance of World TB Day. Three members from Ottawa-Gatineau are attending. At our March 26th meeting, we will welcome a representative from the Ottawa-based [Just Food](#) organization to speak about community gardening as a response to hunger.

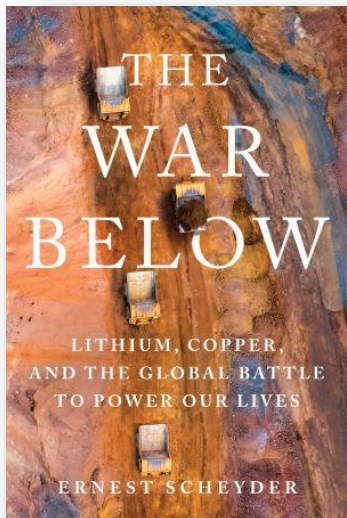
Quebec GRANS -- Regional Leader Suzanne Dufresne, a retired member of the Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec (FTQ) union, has enlisted the support of the president of the union to distribute GRAN messages in French to retired union members.

Resources, Resources, Resources!

We would like to highlight two newly updated resources now available on the GRAN website. Both are suitable to introduce people to GRAN. They can be found under the **Resources** tab in the [Advocacy Toolbox](#). The first, [Introducing the Grandmothers Advocacy Network](#), is a double-sided bilingual handout, suitable for use with MPs, or community partners and officials. The second, [Introducing GRAN](#), is a longer two-page handout that would be great to use with prospective members (as it includes an invitation to sign up for our regular emails). This handout is also available [here](#) in French).

And don't forget this one updated a little over a year ago: [Welcome to GRAN: An Orientation for New Members](#). This handout is four pages long and goes into greater detail about GRAN's work and organization and is especially helpful to brand new members.

Book Corner



The War Below: Lithium, Copper, and the Global Battle to Power Our Lives by Ernest Scheyder (2024)

"*The War Below* provides an illuminating account of the global struggle for control of critical minerals. As the world uses more batteries it will need vastly more lithium, cobalt, nickel, and copper. *The War Below* takes readers on an extraordinary journey from the bottom of the world's deepest mines to the commanding heights of the world's energy system. Scheyder uncovers the forces shaping the struggle for critical minerals, from geopolitical competition between China and the U.S. to political clashes between environmental groups and the world's largest mining firms. This is essential reading for understanding the critical minerals upon which the energy transition relies."

— Chris Miller, author of *Chip War: The Fight for the World's Most Critical Technology*

Actions

Send your Right to Food postcard to Minister Hussen and try to meet with your MP and/or send them GRAN's [infosheet on the hunger crisis](#) in advance of the Federal Budget (April 16). Let us know the actions you've taken by sending a brief email to info@grandmothersadvocacy.org. You can find more details along with helpful resources for these Right to Food actions [here](#).

[Click here](#) to send an online letter to the manager of the Canada Pension Plan and/or your private pension fund.

The petition against deep-sea mining is available [here](#). Please consider signing it.

One last thing... Don't forget to register for *Hello Friends!* Check out the program and guest speakers on our [Hello Friends! webpage](#). We hope to see you there!