



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

GRAN Update - April 2024

Hello Friends!

We are just a few weeks away from *Hello Friends!*, our GRAN national gathering that is taking place at Toronto Metropolitan University, May 13-15. We are excited about the program we have planned, with many opportunities for learning, engagement, and connecting. We are especially pleased to have as inspiring guest speakers, journalist and activist Sally Armstrong, and Executive Director of SeedChange, Ama Deawuo. And we are delighted that a panel of our early leaders - Peggy Edwards, Kathleen Wallace-Deering, and Pat Evans – will be with us to share their stories of GRAN's beginnings. We are also planning to have plenty of time for lively conversations about GRAN's past, present, and future work.



We very much hope to have you with us! If you've not yet registered, you can do so [here](#). For those of you unable to be there in person, but planning to attend online, why not gather with other GRANs in your area to have your own "*Hello Friends!* watch party"? You can find a program with timings for all the sessions to be livestreamed [here](#).

Right to Food Campaign (RtF)

The RtF Team is very pleased with the accomplishments of the past 15 months. The [Small Sips](#) have helped all of us learn so much about the deeper causes and consequences of food insecurity.

Webinars have made us aware that there are solutions, but they need to be implemented and robustly supported by international institutions such as the United Nations and its agencies, the World Health

Organization, and the World Food Programme along with NGOs, and G20 countries and political leaders. Wars have exacerbated the problem of food insecurity and hunger. We can see this daily on the news.



Photo courtesy WFP

Sudan is an area of grave concern, getting not nearly enough attention or response from the global community. The brutal civil war shows no sign of easing after 10 months of fighting. The World Food Programme is warning that this war threatens to trigger the “world’s largest hunger crisis”. You can read more about this underreported emergency [here](#).

Last week, the World Food Programme reported that more than 25 million people scattered across Sudan, South Sudan, and Chad are “trapped in a spiral of deteriorating food security”. This is why the [recent announcement](#) by Minister Hussen of \$132.2 million to support humanitarian and development needs in Sudan and neighbouring countries is so very welcome.

Climate Justice Watch Group

In Canada, the “carbon tax” has received much political and media attention this month, complete with disinformation. In March approximately 300 economists signed this [open letter](#) in which they state that arguments against carbon pricing are based on myths, and that the levy is the least costly way to reach Canada's climate goals. Climate Action Network Canada (CAN-Rac) has issued [this statement](#) correcting the disinformation and suggesting solutions to the affordability crisis. As a member of CAN-Rac, GRAN signed on to this statement. It provides great speaking points to help you engage in conversations on these issues with family and friends.

Legislation to require banks and pensions to align with climate action remains a key missing piece of Canada's climate plan. The Climate-Aligned Finance Act (CAFA), Bill S-243, aims to fix this gap. CAFA would comprehensively align our financial sector – our banks, pensions and insurance companies – with the realities of climate change. CAFA would hold corporate directors to account for climate action, mandate climate action plans from financial institutions, ensure there is no climate-related conflict of interest on boards, and ensure that financial regulators act on climate. GRAN has been supporting this legislation as it works its way through the Senate under the leadership of Senator Rosa Galvez. Watch this recently-released compelling 3 ½ minute [video](#) about the urgency of passing CAFA.

Health Watch Group

Malaria -- The Global Fund reports that climate change and conflict are increasing the spread of malaria. In 2022, Pakistan experienced its worst outbreak in 50 years when flooding caused by climate change resulted in stagnant water where mosquitoes could thrive



Photo courtesy Results Canada

TB -- Thanks to the efforts of Results Canada and its partners, 43 landmarks across Canada were lit up in red on March 24 for World TB Day to build awareness and stand in solidarity with the millions of people affected by tuberculosis. The theme this year was “Yes! We Can End TB”.

Convention on the Rights of Older Persons (CROP)

The Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing (OEWGA), established by a resolution of the UN in 2010, is working to identify gaps and the means to address them in 14 topic areas such as equality and non-discrimination, autonomy and independence, and access to justice. To that end, a questionnaire was sent a year ago to NGOs. Co-facilitators of the OEWGA are currently analyzing responses (including a questionnaire submitted by GRAN). It is expected that the completed report will be ready for presentation at the 14th Session of the Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing in May 2024.

Education Watch Group

During their recent Summit (February 2024), the African Union (AU) convened Heads of State to launch the Year of African Education with the theme “Educate an African fit for the 21st Century: Building resilient education systems for increased access to inclusive, lifelong, quality, and relevant learning in Africa”.

The EdWG is delighted that this theme is linked very closely to the fight against hunger and malnutrition. Children who are hungry cannot learn. Education is also pivotal in imparting sustainable farming methods, nutrition, and dietary practices. The education and proper financing of these farmers who play such a pivotal role in raising food will be a focus of this important year for Africa.

[UNICEF](#) is joining forces with the AU in supporting the Year of African Education. This (very dense but informative) document from Education Finance Watch, [Special Edition for the African Union Year of Education 2024](#) explains some of the financial background required to help this initiative to succeed.

Mining Justice Watch Group

Amid a dire human rights situation in Ecuador, its government and the government of Canada are rushing to negotiate a trade agreement with huge risks to people and the environment. Representatives of both countries have stated their goal is to attract and protect more Canadian mines in Ecuador. According to information from the Chamber of Mining of Ecuador, at least eleven companies backed by Canadian capital are operating in nine provinces of Ecuador with extremely high levels of socio-environmental conflicts caused by violations of the law and the constitution, often with the complicity of regulatory authorities.

“Ecuador must defend its right to say NO to international investment tribunals and to the privileges afforded to foreign investors.” GRAN joined several other organizations in endorsing this important statement of solidarity with Ecuadorian organizations fighting for a "no" vote in an April 21 referendum question on re-approving Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) in the country. ISDS allows companies to sue if they are restricted in their activities. In past instances they've done so to the tune of billions of dollars...effectively holding communities and countries hostage.

We encourage you to watch [What's at Stake in Canada's Trade Negotiations with Ecuador? Investor Protections vs. the Rights of Communities and Nature](#), a powerful webinar with the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment and three women defenders of Indigenous rights and the environment in Ecuador. The panelists report on the impact of Canadian mining companies operating in Ecuador as well as the catastrophic effects of Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS).

WHAT'S AT STAKE IN CANADA'S TRADE NEGOTIATIONS WITH ECUADOR?
Investor protections vs the rights of communities and nature

April 4, 2024 | 2:00 - 3:30 PM ET

SPEAKERS

ECUADOR	ECUADOR	ECUADOR	CANADA	CANADA
Fanny Utitaj Amazilian Women Defenders of the Forest, Shuar Nation	Hortensia Zhagüi Kimsaicha Agroecology	Ivonne Ramos Acción Ecológica	David R Boyd UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights & Environment	Ketty Niyabandi Secretary General, Amnesty International Canada

ORGANIZED BY
Amnesty International Canada
Canadian Centre for Policy
Alternatives (CCPA)
MiningWatch Canada

Simultaneous interpretation
available on Zoom

See the **Actions** section at the end of this *Update* for how you can raise your voice to call on Canada to put human rights and the environment first in its trade negotiations with Ecuador.

Good News Stories GRAN is Following

- **Canada Announces over \$142 Million in Funding to Support Health Systems and Women’s Health and Rights in the DRC and Benin.**
[Click here](#) to read the Global Affairs Canada news release for details about the projects this funding will support.

- **Older Women Prevail in Landmark Climate Case**
The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruled last week in favour of a group of more than 2000 older women from Switzerland who had argued that their government's inadequate efforts to combat climate change put them at risk of dying during heat waves. The European court's decision could have a ripple effect across Europe and beyond, setting a precedent for how some courts deal with the rising tide of climate litigation argued on the basis of human rights infringements. [Click here](#) to read more.



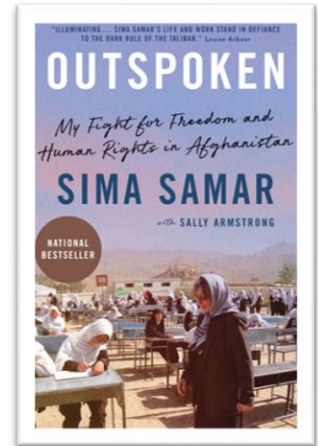


Hold the Date! – GRAN Annual General Meeting

We look forward to welcoming all GRAN members to our Annual General Meeting on **June 12th at 3 p.m. ET**. This is a great opportunity to look back on our busy year, celebrate our successes, and be grateful for the GRAN community we have built together. Look for your invitation coming soon!

Book Corner

We recommend this national bestseller - *Outspoken* - by Sima Samar with Sally Armstrong (our keynote speaker for [Hello Friends!](#)). *Outspoken* is the impassioned memoir of Afghanistan's Dr. Samar: medical doctor, public official, founder of schools and hospitals, thorn in the side of the Taliban, nominee for the Nobel Peace Prize, and lifelong advocate for girls and women.



Learning Event

April 30th, 1 p.m. (ET) Climate Change, Love, and Seniors: What's the Connection?

This webinar is hosted by the [Group of 78](#) and features Dr. Louise Comeau. Research and polls suggest that concerns about healthcare, security, and love of our grandchildren are potential communication pathways for engaging seniors. [Click here](#) to register.

Actions

Health - Support Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) by signing their “Time for \$5” [petition](#) demanding US corporation Danaher drop the price to US\$5 for all their ‘GeneXpert’ medical tests for low- and middle-income countries, for diseases such as TB, HIV, hepatitis, sexually-transmitted infections and Ebola.

Climate - Consider signing this parliamentary e-petition to support the carbon tax [here](#). Note that the **deadline to sign the petition deadline is April 21st**.

Mining Justice - Ketty Nivyabandi, Secretary General of Amnesty International Canada, is urging Canadians to support this [e-action](#) containing this message to Trade Minister Mary Ng regarding negotiations with Ecuador, asking that there be, **“No trade deal without human rights, consultation and consent”**.