



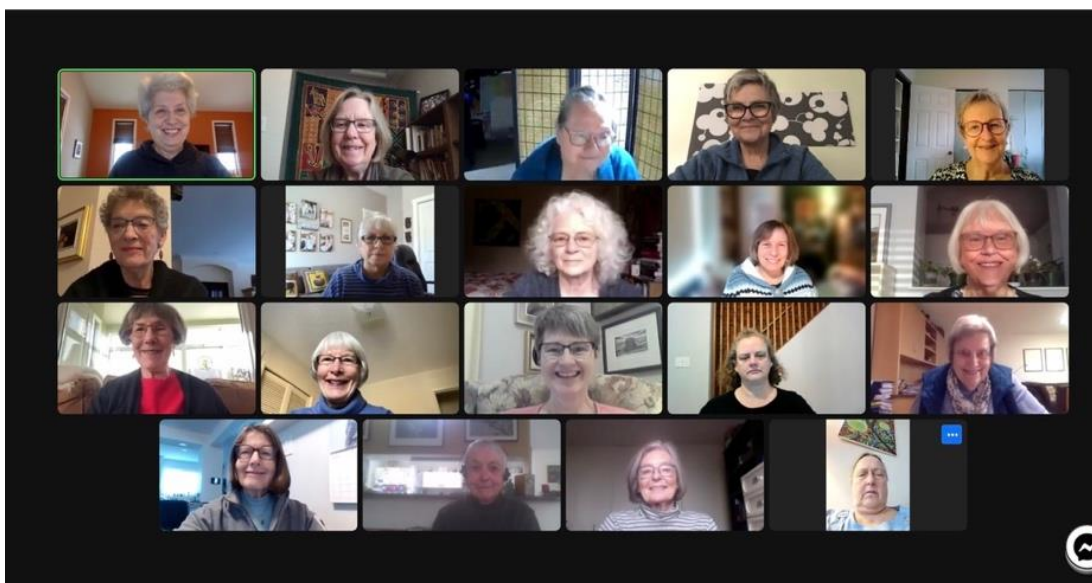
Advocating for the human rights of older women
Défense des droits de la personne des femmes âgées

Annual Report

April 3, 2023 to March 31, 2024

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 marginalized 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 Steering Committee



The year 2023/24 was a busy one, with GRAN focussing our attention on the global hunger crisis. Millions of people in the Global South, and in particular in sub-Saharan

Africa, have been increasingly experiencing hunger and food insecurity due to a cascading series of shocks related to climate change, armed conflicts, global economic downturns, and rising food prices. In response, GRANs raised our voices defending the fundamental human right to food. We urged the Government of Canada to commit additional resources to international humanitarian and development assistance to alleviate hunger and invest in resilient global food systems and we challenged them to show leadership in this area on the world stage. The global hunger crisis galvanized us as we delved deeper into understanding its root causes, impacts, and solutions. We were reminded over and over of the resilience and leadership of women who work tirelessly to feed their families and communities. They are the mothers, grandmothers, small-scale farmers, and entrepreneurs of the Global South who, with creativity, resourcefulness, and determination, work to create a better and more sustainable future. This year's annual report profiles our advocacy in support of their contributions and leadership.

This past year GRAN has also been busy behind the scenes taking steps to streamline and strengthen our organization. The Steering Committee revised and simplified GRAN protocols and guidelines and initiated a review of our leadership model. We undertook a clean-up of our website, making sure that available information and resources are current and useful. We collaborated on the all-of-GRAN Right to Food campaign, strengthened our efforts to engage GRAN grassroots members, and came together in planning our first in-person national gathering in six years. Two particularly meaningful developments for GRAN going forward are the implementation of our first national Land Acknowledgement and an update to the tag line of the GRAN logo to better reflect our renewed vision and mission: **Grandmothers Advocacy Network: *Advocating for the human rights of older women.***

Thank you, GRANs for a great year of learning and action. We are certain you will be inspired by seeing a full year of GRAN advocacy gathered into this report. A big thanks to all of you who worked behind the scenes or out in front, who brought your ideas to the table, and who worked to raise GRAN issues with your MPs and in your communities.

The Steering Committee looks forward to continuing to work with the GRAN community as we raise our voices for the human rights of older women and work together to strengthen our advocacy to ensure that GRAN voices are heard.

Rae Yates

Chair, GRAN Steering Committee

Right to Food All-of-GRAN Campaign

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. We also recognize the intersectionality of food insecurity with many other issues: a changing climate, economic downturns and poverty, migration, gender inequality, and small-scale farmers displaced from their lands due to mining projects. The consequences of food insecurity are also broad, and include: increased vulnerability to disease; delayed development in young children; early school departure; early child marriage; and gender-based violence. The all-of-GRAN approach that we adopted informed our deeper understanding of the issues and strengthened our advocacy messaging.

The **Right to Food (RtF)** was chosen in October 2022 as the focus for the second all-of-GRAN campaign. This campaign continued through April 2024.

The 22-member RtF campaign team includes representation from GRAN Watch Groups and teams from across Canada. The team provided leadership to this year's advocacy campaign, to organization-wide learning about the complex issues around hunger, and undertook an in-depth evaluation.



GRAN Advocacy

GRANs all across the country bring diverse strengths to our advocacy for human rights and international development. This past year we continued to build strong relationships with members of Parliament and cabinet ministers through meetings, letters, email, and social media. Advocacy actions included numerous face-to-face and Zoom meetings, sending letters and emails, and engaging the public through letters to the editors of local and national newspapers, and participation in public events. At every opportunity we raised the issue of food insecurity and Canada's responsibility to marginalized peoples in the Global South. We rallied support for small-scale farmers in recognition of their critical role in building sustainable local food systems. We highlighted the work of women farmers and entrepreneurs who are leading change in their communities and beyond.



Victoria GRAN Phyllis Webster (R) with Minister Hussein

GRANs extended a welcome to Minister Hussein in his new role as Minister of International Development. We were pleased to have several opportunities to meet with him in person at events coordinated by the British Columbia Council for International Cooperation (BCCIC). We also reached out to him with email messages from across the country, a letter from GRAN Co-chairs and a deluge of postcards regarding the need for a Canadian response to the ever-increasing issue of food insecurity.

A priority in the Right to Food campaign was to advocate for an increase in funding for international development. Seventy-two GRANs and GRAN supporters sent letters to Minister of Finance Chrystia Freeland urging the Canadian Government to announce an increase in International Assistance in Budget 2023 in order to build more resilient food systems in the Global South. And then when



Greater Van GRAN members Sheila Pepper and Gail Mullen with Minister Hussein along with reps from VIDEA

Official Development Assistance was in fact reduced, GRANs sent Mother's Day cards to the Minister, expressing our disappointment and concern. GRAN signed on to a [news release](#), with over 90 other civil society organizations, which spoke to Canada's failure to deliver on its promise to increase foreign aid every year. GRAN Co-Chairs sent a [letter to the Prime Minister and Finance Minister](#) with similar messaging, and we expressed GRAN's deep disappointment in the government on social media.

In May, 2023 GRANs joined Results Canada to send letters to the Executive Director of the World Bank, highlighting the need for reform at the Bank, especially in the disbursement of funds to lower-income countries. We also supported the ONE Campaign as they raised the issue of the debt burden of lower-income countries and called for debt cancellation and reform of the international monetary system.

In June and all through the summer, GRANs met with their MPs across the country at barbecues and open houses.



Greg Fergus, MP Hull-Aylmer QC with GRAN Pat Dolan.



GRAN Joan Burrows with Joyce Murray, MP Vancouver Quadra BC



Greater Van GRANs Hedey Dunsmuir (L) and Gail Mullen (R) with Bonita Zarrillo, MP Port Moody-Coquitlam BC (centre) Mullan

During International Development Week in February, GRAN joined Cooperation Canada in Hill Days where Jo-Anne Stead represented GRAN in meetings with MP's. We collaborated with Canadian Foodgrains Bank and Engineers Without Borders in sending letters to Ministers and MPs requesting action on the global food and climate crises.

In the lead-up to the 2024 federal budget GRANs sent postcards to Minister Hussen, other parliamentarians and met with MPs asking for an increase in international assistance to address the global hunger



Hill Days attended by GRAN Jo-Anne Stead of Ottawa-Gatineau GRANs (2nd from L) with MP Heather MacPherson and others.

crisis. GRAN continues to be active on social media through Facebook and X (formerly Twitter), amplifying messages to Parliamentarians and international leaders.

Learning together

This past year our GRAN community prioritized learning about the complex issues related to hunger and food security in the Global South and also here at home.

The Right to Food team produced a series of short informative articles that explored causes, challenges, and solutions related to global hunger. Initially these were sent out weekly as email messages to GRANs to facilitate our learning about such a complex issue. You can check out all installments of our [Small Sips](#) series for some of the learning we have undertaken to date. The campaign team also maintained an online library of print and video resources on the Right to Food.

GRAN also hosted a series of [online learning events](#) throughout the year that contributed significantly to our understanding of the issues related to food security. We are grateful to the many allies, partners, and GRAN members who participated in the events, sharing their expertise and passions.



Dr. Elizabeth Vibert from the Department of History at the University of Victoria spoke of the impact of a pervasive colonial mindset on our current industrial food system and the struggles for food justice among the world's small-scale farmers. Elizabeth provided GRANs with insight into building sustainable and just food systems, and how we can support small-scale farmers in their struggle to feed themselves and their communities with dignity.

The GRAN Advocacy Planning Team planned an advocacy skills-building event that included a role-play of a GRAN meeting with an MP, ably played by GRAN “actors” Janet Siddall and Phyllis Webster. We were joined for the event by Anita Vandenberg, Liberal MP for Ottawa West-Nepean and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development. Ms. Vandenberg explained why MPs need to hear



GRANs Janet Siddall (Whitehorse) and Phyllis Webster (Victoria) and MP Anita Vandenberg

from their constituents on the issues they are concerned about. She highlighted strategies for effective interactions.



Anne Gardner, a member of the Greater Vancouver GRANs, provided an excellent learning event entitled ***What Does Food Insecurity Look Like?*** She shared her insights into the many dimensions of food insecurity, providing examples from Liberia where she worked for a number of years. During her presentation, she examined root causes of hunger and shared stories of community empowerment.

Leticia Ama Deawuo, Executive Director of SeedChange addressed the importance of agroecology and food sovereignty in building just and sustainable food systems. Agroecology promotes nature-based farming practices that mitigate climate change by reducing emissions, recycling resources, and prioritizing local supply chains. Agroecology requires us to challenge and transform the structures of power in society to support the important role of small-scale farmers who provide much of the food consumed by people in the Global South.



Peggy Edwards, Co-founder and Past Co-Chair, GRAN

Our own Peggy Edwards was invited by the British Columbia Council for International Cooperation (BCCIC) to speak as one of three panelists in the webinar ***Fresh Food, Distressed Planet: Women's Leadership, Food Security, Climate Justice & Peace***. The event explored women's lived realities and leadership in Peru, Central America, and sub-Saharan Africa. Peggy spoke of the importance of intergenerational collaboration and the role of older women in creating positive change.



Elsie Bokaba

Elsie Bokaba, a Master of Arts in Philosophy candidate at the North-West University in Potchefstroom, South Africa, shared her research and her passion for the often-neglected role of older women in rural South Africa. Elsie spoke of the negative and long-lasting impact of colonialism on the role of older women in Africa, the unique environmental values that African grandmothers hold, and the contributions they are making in tackling the environmental crisis in the Global South.

Regional Actions and Events

The Greater Toronto Area GRANs hosted a public event in October 2023 entitled ***Hunger Hurts: Local and Global Paths to Food Justice***. They facilitated a moderated discussion with speakers from the Daily Bread Food Bank, SeedChange, ONE, and Pat Dolan, Past Co-Chair of GRAN. Topics included the dramatic increase in poverty and food insecurity, both locally and globally, and ways in which advocacy can make a difference.



Ruthann Hicks of GTA GRAN and Pat Dolan, GRAN Past Co-Chair.



GRANs Sharon Graham, Sonja Rundle, and Joyce Nicholson at the GRAN Sharing Table.

Northumberland GRANs led a food security initiative in Brighton, ON over the summer. They set up a picnic table for the sharing of produce, with the invitation to all to ***“Share what you can, take what you need.”*** They reported that often the produce was gone by noon and then replaced in the afternoon. Local GRANs reported this was a very rewarding venture and one that they hope to resume in the next growing season.

Health - 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. Throughout the year GRAN continued to work closely with our partners including Results Canada, Médecins sans Frontières (MSF), GAVI, and ONE Campaign, wherever possible supporting their initiatives and campaigns for access to medicines. With representation on the Right to Food campaign team, the Access to Medicines Watch Group conducted research and provided resources on the profound impacts of hunger on health among the world's most marginalized people, and especially on the lives of women and children.

Malaria is a disease that seldom gets much media coverage. And yet, the prevalence of malaria has been increasing globally with the impact of climate change, and millions of people dying annually from this mosquito born infection. There is good news to report, though. Progress was made this past year. The World Health Organization approved two vaccines for the prevention of malaria, vaccines that are now being rolled out across much of sub-Saharan Africa.

Climate Justice

GRAN kept a close eye on the UN climate change conference, COP28, which took place in Dubai, United Arab Emirates from November 30 - December 10, 2023.

Progress was made at the event thanks to the leadership of GRAN's partners, Climate Action Network Canada and Climate Action Network International. In response to strong efforts from Lower-Income Countries, and supported by advocacy from GRAN and many other civil society organizations, a Loss and Damage Fund for developing countries was formally established. This fund will help lower-income countries recover from extreme weather events caused by climate change. COP28 included a number of other encouraging "firsts": an agreement to transition away from fossil fuels, recognizing the scientific evidence that this is the major cause of climate change, and declarations on the [intersection of climate and health](#) and on [food systems and climate](#).



Sandra Stec and Stella Val, Ottawa Gatineau GRANs

GRAN members were very active in signing climate-related petitions and amplifying the voices of our climate justice partners. We raised our voices at Global Climate Strike



Victoria GRAN members attending Fridays for Future Global Climate Rally against Fossil Fuels

rallies across the country in support of Fridays for Future youth leaders. Victoria GRAN members were fortunate to hear David Suzuki speak at the September rally where he called on Canadians to ***“write or call your politicians at least once a week and tell those people in office what our priorities should be. If they get one or two calls it is dismissed. If they start getting 100 calls, they are going to pay attention.”***

Education

GRAN continues to work closely with our allies at the Canadian International Education Policy Working Group (CIEPWG) and to support the work of The Global Partnership for Education (GPE). Over the past year GRAN has expressed concern regarding the number of children, especially girls, that not receiving an education, the desperate lack of teachers across the Global South, and the critical need for education and training to build local resilience and capacity. GRAN members have used every opportunity to raise the issue of global education with the government of Canada. Education is central to addressing the priorities of youth employment, climate action, food security, health, and gender resilience.

Despite notable advancements in education access (there are 50 million more girls in school worldwide than in 2015), sub-Saharan Africa continues to face persistent challenges with school dropout. Not only does the region host the highest out-of-school population in the world, with almost 100 million children not enrolled in schools, but it is also the only region where the out-of-school population is growing.

The Education Watch Group intends to follow the African Union's newly announced Year of African Education under 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”***. There will be a real emphasis on financial support for schools, and also training to help small-scale farmers who raise 80% of the food produced in sub-Saharan Africa.

Ending Violence Against Women

For the past seven years, GRANs across the country have participated in the United Nations **Orange the World Campaign: 16 Days of Activism to End Gender-Based Violence**. Once again, this year GRANs across the country highlighted the campaign in their communities by having local landmarks lit up in orange or 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. This year the Ottawa-Gatineau GRANs used purple in solidarity with the Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women.



Ottawa Gatineau GRANs with MPs, Ottawa City Counsellors and members of the Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women



Winnipeg GRANs attend a December 6th vigil

The leadership provided by GRANs across Canada included awareness-raising activities such as lighting up city halls and legislative buildings, setting up info tables at local libraries, holding proclamation events with MPs and municipal leaders, and attending community rallies and vigils. In Victoria, BC, a high school group and a church performed GRAN Phyllis Webster's Readers'

Theater: **"Climbing the Staircase to Success: Barriers to Education for Girls in sub-Saharan Africa"**.

Many GRANs submitted photos of events and lit up landmarks in their communities. We have gathered them into an Orange Campaign photo gallery which we encourage you to visit [here](#).

Mining Justice

Widespread and well-documented human rights abuses continue to be associated with the activities of many Canadian mining companies abroad. Human rights abuses reported this past year include cases of violence and gender-based violence, appropriation of land from small-scale farmers, contamination of sources of water, and degradation of the land.

Canada has the responsibility to hold this corporate sector to account and yet Canadian legislation related to investigation and intervention remains very weak. GRAN continues to advocate to strengthen the role of the Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise (CORE). Advocacy actions have included letters, petitions, and meetings with MPs. The Mining Justice Watch Group works closely with Mining Watch Canada in stressing the urgency of this issue. GRANs in Toronto and Victoria have also called attention to this concern in local rallies.



Toronto-based Raging Grannies, including GRAN Gaye-Francis Alexander (R), joined a group of protesters at the Barrick Gold Annual Shareholder meeting in May, 2023.



Victoria GRANs participate in Say No to Deep Sea Mining rally and postcard campaign - June, 2023

There is evidence that positive change is happening. Despite opposition from industry groups, International Trade Minister Mary Ng announced a commitment to review the role of the Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise (CORE). There are several pieces of Canadian legislation that are moving slowly through the political process that are encouraging: [Bill C-262](#) (environmental racism and environmental justice) and Bill C-263 (which increases powers to the Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise). Other positive changes internationally

include numerous corporate due diligence laws being passed in Europe, articles in newspapers reporting on allegations of human rights abuses and the need for more regulation, and overall growing public awareness that change is needed in the mining industry.

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

A Convention on the Rights of Older Persons would be a crucial international instrument providing legal protection for the human rights of older women, the very focus of GRAN advocacy. GRAN continues to closely follow the progress of this important work, and in November participated in a survey by the Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing of the UN (OEWGA) to help identify gaps in areas such as equality and non-discrimination; violence, neglect, and abuse; long-term care and palliative care; autonomy and independence; and access to justice. It is hoped that recommendations from this process will be consistent with the message that the current existing international human rights framework does not adequately protect the rights of older persons and that a new legally binding UN convention is the best way to address this.

Treasurer's Message

Once again, a huge and heartfelt thank you to all who supported the Grandmothers Advocacy Network this past year with your donations. GRAN neither seeks nor receives any external funding, so the financial support we receive from our members is critical to our work. This year our revenues during our February campaign significantly exceeded our goal, and our revenue this fiscal year exceeded our expenses, leaving us in a positive balance. (See the Annual Financial Statement in the Appendix.) We are so grateful for this generous financial support in addition to the many, many volunteer hours our members put in sharing their time and talents.

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

Message from GRAN Co-Chairs

Thank you to the many GRAN members who have helped make this such an active and successful year. We want to take this opportunity to remind ourselves that changes that result from our advocacy efforts are often subtle, delayed, incremental and, above all, unpredictable! Even so, these results can be profoundly significant. We must always remember that, even when we least expect it, our advocacy can result in positive change. GRANs working together and collaborating with partners to amplify our voices can and do make a difference!

Linda Kulkarni and Sharon Graham

GRAN Co-Chairs



**Your actions matter. No
action or voice is too small
to make a difference.**

—*Vanessa Nakate*

Appendix

GRAN Income Statement for Year Ending March 31, 2024

Balance Beginning of Fiscal 2022/23 **\$23,487***

Revenue 2023/24

General Donations	313
February Campaign Donations	6,010
Donations as Gifts	100

Total Revenue:	\$6,423

Expenses 2023/24

Zoom	685
Website Hosting, Support, Action Network	808
Organizational Memberships	866
Meetings/Conferences/Watch Groups/Face-to-Face	524
Training/Learning Events	1,586
Postage/Office Supplies	152
Archives	0
Miscellaneous	52

Total Expenses:	\$4,521

Net Income (Loss) 2023/2024 **\$1,165**

Balance End of Fiscal 2023/24 **\$25,239***

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

Financial Report prepared by Mary Jane Sterne, GRAN Financial Assistant
April 29, 2024