

GRAN is grateful to Phyllis Webster of the Victoria GRANS and the GRAN Education Working Group for submitting this suggestion for a focused conversation with our grandchildren on the issues GRAN cares about and why we are committed to this work.

For an example of how this might work, you can listen to Phyllis and her grandson Oscar having a chat. You can listen here: <https://soundcloud.com/user-541762971-753880112/oscar-grandma-africa-podcast>

So much can come of intergenerational sharing. Do give it a try!

Grandchildren and Grandmothers Talk

Purpose

The purpose of this podcast is for a grandmother and a grandchild to have a conversation about what it means to be a grandmother, with a special emphasis on why the grandmother belongs to GRAN (Grandmothers Advocacy Network). The question your grandchild might ask is, “Why do you work so hard to help grandmothers in sub-Saharan Africa?”

Background to GRAN for your grandchild

The women who belong to GRAN may or may not be grandmothers themselves but are deeply concerned that millions of grandmothers in Africa are raising their own grandchildren and often the children of their sisters and brothers because the parents of these children have died of AIDS, leaving no one but the older women to raise the children. These grandmas often cannot read because they have never been to school, and they have no job skills with which to make any money. Often they have small plots of land on which to raise some vegetables but generally are very poor.

Their greatest hope is to have all their grandchildren go to school so that they can get jobs and support themselves and others. The problem is that often there is not enough money for school fees, and money is also needed to buy school supplies, uniforms, and shoes. If there is money, the boys are sent to school first and the girls must stay home to help cook, clean, carry water long distances and help look after the younger children. There are many other reasons why grandchildren cannot go to school. As you can imagine, grandmothers become very tired and are often sick but there is no clinic nearby to get help for their grandchildren when they are ill or medication for themselves. Also, there are many problems with violence against women. Sometimes girls are married very, very young and this means they have children before their bodies are ready for pregnancy. There are other problems which your grandmother can tell you about.

The Conversation

We hope that you, as grandmother and grandchild, will talk about many things as you normally do, but, in this case, there will be a way for your grandchild to explore the things that you do to help other women's grandchildren. Here are some beginning questions which your grandchild could ask you which might start that discussion:

1. What are the favourite times or holidays that we have spent together? What do you most enjoy doing with me?
2. What do you do when you are not with me?
3. What work does Grandmothers Advocacy Network (GRAN) do?
4. Why are you so interested in the grandmothers in Africa and their grandchildren?

(Every grandmother has different interests. For instance, in the podcast, Oscar's grandma is particularly concerned about the grandmothers' difficulties in sending their grandchildren, in particular, their granddaughters to school. Another grandmother may be working hard to ensure that grandmothers can get medication for their family and for themselves. And another grandmother may be very worried about how the older women are treated because they are old. Another grandma is working hard to end violence against girls and women)

5. Is there anything else that you would like to talk about?

Remember that the purpose of this podcast is simply to have a conversation, so if you go off the topic that is all right. We hope that you and your grandchild will have fun talking together. This chat is an invitation to be intentional about sharing your passion for justice in the world and, in particular, your concern for Africa's grandmothers and grandchildren. It is often hard to know what influence we actually have on our children and grandchildren, but they are usually keen observers. May our grandchildren catch the spark for justice from listening to our stories (and watching us in action!).