



## **GRAN Interactions with Ministers Parliamentary Secretaries and Deputy Ministers**

As a CSO, advocating at the highest level with Cabinet Ministers or their alternates is a sought after, but often elusive, goal. In order to be seen as credible, and to maximize any time that GRAN may be granted with a Minister, we need to be coordinated and strategic.

This document sets out a process that will help us get there.

### **Why Write to a Minister?**

In writing a letter or email to a Minister (or an MP for that matter), it is an opportunity to put forward GRAN's position on an issue (or issues) and let the Minister know what actions we want the government to take in response. Writing a letter also allows us raise awareness among government officials (including the Minister, her staff and public servants) about our mission in support of the human rights of grandmothers and the youth in their care.

### **Approach for Letters to a Minister**

Letters to Ministers and their Parliamentary Secretaries should go through the Leadership Team (LT) and be signed by the co chairs of GRAN. Recommendations for letters to Ministers normally originate in the Working Groups.

The Steering Committee (SC) and the LT will review the correspondence for consistency with GRAN's overall messaging to the government and ensure that the "left hand knows what the right hand is doing". The LT has set up a centralized process to track this ministerial correspondence, and in particular, to track the responses we receive.

This of course, does not preclude letter writing campaigns (often in collaboration with our partners), where individual GRANs write to Ministers to urge a specific action and where the goal is to get as many citizens and constituents on record as possible. These campaigns are reviewed and approved before letters are sent by the SC and often templates are provided to assist letter-writers.

### **Why Meet with a Minister?**

Nothing is better than advocating our case in person to the decision makers in government. Meetings with Ministers or their alternates, should be used to present GRAN as an effective, coordinated voice advocating on behalf of the grandmothers of Africa and the vulnerable children in their care.

We have learned from experience that these meetings may be granted on short notice and the Minister's staff may request background papers and bios. So being prepared up front is important. Getting face time with a Minister is difficult. Looking for hooks, such as recent policy announcements helps, as does having a GRAN who is in the Minister's riding make the request as a constituent.

## **Approach for Requesting a Meeting with a Minister**

While the idea of meeting with a Minister may come from a WG and be related to a specific issue, to be effective and credible, we need to present our request as coming from GRAN as an organization. We may also want to consider if it would be appropriate to raise our other issues as well, if a meeting is accepted.

The process is similar to what is used for correspondence, i.e. that such requests go through the LT for the purposes of coordination and to let the other working groups know that there is a meeting being proposed. Specifically, the WG should ask their LT rep to raise it on their behalf. The LT would commit to a quick turn-around by email.

The request for a meeting could go from the GRAN co chairs unless there is a GRAN constituent in the Minister's riding. If that is the case we are often more successful if the constituent makes the request with a cc to the GRAN co chairs. However, for consistency, if possible the request should reference earlier correspondence or meetings and clearly state what we wish to discuss at the proposed meeting. Those participating in the meeting are usually identified after the meeting is set based on the timing, the issues and who is available to attend. This can be done by the working group in consultation with the LT.

While this process would be a best case scenario, it is recognized that considerable flexibility will be required if timelines are tight so that opportunities are not missed.

## **Meetings with Other Officials**

Sometimes the Minister's Office will advise that the Minister is not available and propose another senior official. If it is at the level of a Parliamentary Secretary or Deputy Minister, we will use the same process. It is also recognized that working groups have developed relationships with officials below the Deputy Minister level (Assistant Deputy Ministers, Directors General, Directors etc). The working groups are encouraged to pursue dialogue with these officials directly as they feel appropriate.

All this being said, sometimes an opportunity to meet with a Minister can arise from other events or conversations that GRANs may be having as part of their advocacy. The hope is that we can let everyone know about it as quickly as possible to take maximum advantage of the opportunity to raise our issues and our profile.