



**grandmothers**

Advocacy Network

Mouvement de soutien des

**grands-mères**

## **GRANDMOTHERS ADVOCACY NETWORK**

### **STRATEGIC PLAN 2019 - 2023**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

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 sub-Saharan African grandmothers, children and youth. It provides guidance and co-ordination of advocacy efforts for members across Canada.

### **Our Advocacy:**

GRAN advocacy takes many forms - we advocate by writing letters, emails and editorials, making phone calls, signing and circulating petitions, planning campaigns and events in our communities and meeting with our local MPs. Our campaigns include the use of social media. We educate ourselves about the issues and share our learnings with family and friends, other GRANs and with our community networks. We meet with parliamentarians and officials in Ottawa, represent our issues at national and international events and post our position statements on the website. We work with partner organizations and coalitions and collaborate on particular campaigns.

### **Our Strategic Plan:**

Our strategic plan is framed by our vision, mission and values. It identifies advocacy and organizational priorities for the coming five years and provides criteria for prioritizing, making decisions and evaluating those decisions. Our strategic plan is a living document that will be updated as needed.

## **VISION**

Our vision is global recognition and promotion of the human rights of grandmothers, children and youth in sub-Saharan Africa.

## **MISSION**

The mission of GRAN is to advocate for the human rights of grandmothers, children and youth of sub-Saharan Africa.

## **VALUES**

GRAN, in both its internal and external relationships, acts in accordance with the following values:

**Ubuntu** is a sub-Saharan African philosophy and way of life. Ubuntu defines what it means to be truly human: we affirm our own humanity when we acknowledge the full humanity of others. Ubuntu principles include dignity, respect, empathy, caring, sharing and compassion.

**Social justice** encompasses securing/ensuring human rights, gender equality, equitable distribution of resources, and opportunities for full participation in social, educational, political and economic activities and a space for the human spirit to thrive in safe and healthy environments.

**Honesty and transparency:** honest and transparent communication and decision-making are critical to the healthy development of GRAN. GRAN advocates are provided with opportunities for full and open discussion and an understanding of the options available. Decision-making is preferably by consensus. External partners and the general public are provided with honest and clear communication regarding issues of mutual concern and the possibilities for mutual work.

## **Strategic Directions**

GRAN was formed as an independent organization in 2011. GRAN was officially incorporated as a not-for-profit on May 8, 2012. A Governance Working Group was formed in June 2012 to provide overall direction in our work.

Our first “Hello Friends” conference was held in 2013 which resulted in our first strategic plan covering the period 2014 to 2018. Two more, very successful, conferences were held in 2015 and 2018. The most significant development 5 years ago was the creation of 3 working groups covering the areas (1) access to medicines, (2) ending violence against women and girls and (3) access to universal, quality education. An Ottawa-based Hill Team was also developed which meets with parliamentarians, government officials and political staff in Ottawa and liaises with other CSOs and partner organizations.

In 2016, a GRAN team developed a research paper entitled *Older Women Count!* that details the ways older women in sub-Saharan Africa are often invisible and overlooked. This document pulls together all of our issues and emphasizes their interrelationship.

A summary reviewing the work of GRAN from 2013 to 2018 can be found on our website.

## **GRAN’s Strengths and Challenges**

There are several reasons why our organization is unique and these reasons contribute to our strengths.

- Our focus is on grandmothers, children and youth in sub-Saharan Africa.
- Our membership is comprised mainly of older women volunteers who are enthusiastic and dedicated and possess a wide variety of skills, expertise and knowledge.
- Our members come from across Canada.
- We are able to mobilize grassroots advocates.

- We work with other knowledgeable organizations that share common goals. GRAN has developed ongoing partnerships with several Canadian and international organizations.
- We have an effective communications strategy, both internally and externally.
- We have developed an excellent dynamic website which keeps us up to date on news and encourages advocacy actions.
- We are guided by our governance and policy documents.

We face the following challenges that need to be addressed in order to accomplish our mission:

- Developing recruitment and succession planning processes.
- Developing GRAN groups in all regions of Canada
- Further developing our connections with African grandmothers.
- Increasing our limited financial resources.
- Maintaining the interest and engagement of our grassroots.
- Moving passive recipients of information to engaged activists.
- Reaching out to the francophone community.

## **SITUATION ANALYSIS**

Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy, which was developed by the Liberal Government in 2017, has a primary goal to eradicate poverty which links to United Nations Sustainable Development Goal #1. To realize this goal, Canada must prioritize reaching the nearly 400 million people living in the most severe forms of extreme poverty; what is now termed "ultra-poverty". Eighty percent of people living in ultra-poverty live in just 14 countries. Ten of those 14 countries are in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA).

Within those 10 countries, grandmother-headed households are the poorest of the poor. They have buried their adult children, who are most often the main bread-winners, and turned around to raise some 15 million children and young people orphaned by AIDS.

The Western world is under the misconception that, thanks to antiretroviral medicines, we have conquered HIV/AIDS. But the HIV/AIDS pandemic is far from over in SSA (data from UNAIDS).

- 36.9 million people were living with HIV in 2017.
- In 2017, 70% of the 940,000 AIDS-related deaths happened in SSA.
- AIDS-related illnesses remain the leading cause of death among women of reproductive age globally and are the second leading cause of death for young women aged 15-24 years in Africa.
- While there has been an impressive expansion globally in the coverage of HIV treatment with ARVs, in 2017 only 59% people living with HIV were accessing ARV therapy.
- Millions of others, who likely need ARVs, are not getting them because they are unaware of their HIV status. Older people are especially unlikely to be tested.

Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy promotes and supports gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. But too often, older women are left out. They are left out of the Sustainable Development Goals and international development policies, including Canadian development policy. Older women face discrimination associated with both age and gender. Other factors, such as disability and the stigma associated with HIV/AIDS, can accelerate this discrimination. Like older women all over the world, their contributions and needs often remain invisible.

Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy is an ambitious one but its implementation will need a much more ambitious investment from the Canadian government if it is to reach its stated goals.

In SSA, the challenge of invisibility is exacerbated by a lack of data. For example, very little or no data is collected on HIV status and the experience of violence for women after age 49. In other cases, data is not disaggregated by age and sex. Older women are denied basic services and protection of their rights because they are absent from official records and are invisible to policy-makers and organizations providing development assistance.

A feminist policy must take both a human rights and life course approach that supports gender equality and healthy development from cradle to grave. It must explicitly include older women and recognize their enormous contribution as caregivers, workers and leaders in the community.

Despite the inequities and ageism faced by grandmothers and older women in SSA, they are agents of change and are making a great contribution. With resilience and courage, they are raising the next generation and keeping their communities alive. Grandmothers, along with their local communities, are best placed to define their own problems and develop strategies and actions to address these problems. Investing in these women and their groups is an investment

in building a more peaceful, more inclusive and more prosperous world. We know that one of the most effective ways to support these women is through funding at the community level.

## **GOALS**

GRAN has developed a strategic framework that identifies two overarching strategic goals, priority methods of achieving these goals, some key opportunities, and a set of measurable outcomes that will further our mission and guide our advocacy and organizational growth over the next five years.

### **Two Overarching Goals**

1. **Advocacy:** To influence policy change and stimulate effective action in Canada and internationally to promote and protect the human rights of grandmothers, children and youth in sub-Saharan Africa.
2. **Organization:** To build and strengthen a robust, inclusive and effective advocacy network across Canada.

### **Advocacy Goal**

**To influence policy change and stimulate effective action in Canada and internationally to promote and protect the human rights of grandmothers, children and youth in sub-Saharan Africa.**

#### **1. To keep a strong focus on older women in our advocacy.**

Strategies

- Focusing on the empowerment of women and girls and including in our advocacy the elimination of the exclusion, discrimination and invisibility that grandmothers experience.

#### **2. To adopt a human rights, gender equality, and life course approach which is consistent with national and international development agendas.**

Strategies

- Using a human rights framework that will enable GRAN to refer to global agreements, conventions and laws that will strengthen our advocacy positions for the issues selected.

- Making the linkages to the Sustainable Development Goals to advocate for action by the international community.
- Making the linkages to Canada's Feminist Foreign Policy and Feminist International Assistance Policy to advocate for action by the Canadian Government.

### **3. To advocate in four areas of human rights.**

- Right to education and lifelong learning;
- Right to health;
- Right to freedom from violence; and
- Right to economic security and social protection.

#### Strategies

- Establishing and sustaining issue-based groups to research, educate and plan GRAN actions on advocacy issues on a permanent or ad hoc basis. Currently three working groups have been formed to guide campaigns on ending violence against women, education, and access to medicines. Ad hoc working groups may be formed as new issues arise.
- Fostering collaboration across working groups when dealing with interrelated issues.

### **4. To develop strategic long-term advocacy partnerships.**

Since its inception, GRAN has realized how collaboration with other Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), both in Canada and internationally, strengthens our advocacy. We presently collaborate/partner with international organizations such as MSF, Girls not Brides, the Global Partnership for Education, HelpAge International, and the UN Women Peace and Security Network, and with national organizations such as the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network, Results Canada, Interagency Coalition for Aids and Development (ICAD), the Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC) and its Working Group the Africa-Canada Forum (ACF), and the Canadian International Education Policy Working Group (CIEPWG).

#### Strategies

- Building on the relationships we have already developed by supporting their campaigns, if appropriate.
- Developing new partnerships with relevant CSOs and associations.
- Continuing and expanding the connections made to organizations and individuals in sub-Saharan Africa.
- Participating in national and international conferences on GRAN issues, especially those that include sub-Saharan African grandmothers.
- Hosting visits to Canada by human rights advocates from sub-Saharan Africa, possibly in collaboration with partners.

### **5. To select advocacy campaigns according to the following criteria:**

- The issue fits into the four areas of human rights outlined above..
- It is consistent with and complements our other campaigns.
- There are opportunities for collaboration with other credible NGOs at the international, national or local level.
- It is a politically opportune time to pursue this issue.
- We have access to the expertise and resources to support members in our network so that they can take action.

## **Organizational Goal**

**To build and strengthen a robust, inclusive and effective advocacy network across Canada.**

### **1. To grow and strengthen GRAN by increasing the number of active, engaged members and by developing groups in all regions of Canada.**

#### Strategies

- Ensuring our campaigns are compelling to the grassroots and that good education accompanies any new issue.
- Encouraging the grassroots to provide feedback on the relevance of GRAN's work in their own communities.
- Helping the grassroots link into their wider communities by encouraging connections with local community groups working on issues shared by GRAN.
- GRAN's diverse membership requires a range of advocacy actions in a variety of formats to ensure that our campaigns suit different levels of interest and expertise.
- Encouraging more communication and connections among GRAN groups through regional conferences and gatherings, and by visits to groups from Leadership Team and Working Group members.
- Bringing members together by a Hello Friends conference every 2 years.
- Appreciating the work of all our members and making sure they know that their work does make a difference.
- Inviting active involvement from all our members by using our personal connections.
- Measuring the effectiveness of our campaigns and providing feedback to our members.

### **2. To develop and maintain an effective internal communications strategy.**

#### Strategies

- Continuing our direct messaging which brings both news posts and action messages directly to all our members by email.
- Encouraging our members to make full use of our website.



- Continuing to produce our monthly newsletter, the *GRAN Update*, which informs all our members about the latest campaigns and encourages their active participation.
- Developing GRAN's social media presence and capacity.
- Exploring new technology to connect and educate members.

### **3. To develop and maintain an effective external communications strategy.**

#### Strategies

- Ensuring our website is easily accessible and appealing to the public.
- Extending the reach of our message by appearances as issues experts on local and national radio and TV shows.
- Writing articles and opinion pieces in newspapers and magazines.
- Holding meetings with MPs and their staff members, as well as government officials, to present our issues and encourage their cooperation.
- Preparing and presenting briefs to House of Commons Special and Standing Committees.
- Attending national and international conferences.
- Liaising and collaborating with our partners.
- Continuing support of the GRAN archive project stored at York University

### **4. To become financially self-sustaining**

Funds are needed for: website development and maintenance, teleconference calls, Leadership Team travel, translation, printing and supplies, regional and national gatherings (Hello Friends), membership dues in relevant organizations, and attendance at conferences.

At the present time we have been largely unsuccessful in obtaining funding from outside agencies.

#### Strategies:

- Continuing with the promotion of our annual GRAN funding month.
- Continuing with our successful annual Aeroplan miles donation campaign.
- Promoting donations via the website – in memory of someone or in celebration of a special event.
- Bringing the financial needs of GRAN to the attention of our members.
- Seeking opportunities for funding from outside organizations.

### **5. To update our governance documents**

- Ensuring our governance and policy documents, as well as our handbook, are regularly updated.
- Making our grassroots and Working Groups aware of these documents.

## **Evaluation and Measurable Outcomes**

### **Evaluation**

Consider using different evaluation strategies including analyses, surveys and interviews to gain insight into the success and impact of our campaigns. Each campaign is responsible for evaluating its own success and communicating this to the Steering Committee.

### **Measurable Outcomes**

#### **Advocacy**

- Implementation in Canada of policies, programs and legislation for which GRAN advocates alone or in partnership.
- Positive responses from MPs, Ministers, Prime Minister to our requests.
- Increased involvement of African grandmothers in GRAN's work through tangible contacts and robust partnerships.

#### **Organizational**

- Number and diversity of GRAN members involved in advocacy work.
- Francophone participation, including the establishment of at least one francophone GRAN group.
- Funding established for ongoing advocacy work and for attendance at conferences.
- GRAN members motivated to serve as Regional Leaders and members of the Steering Committee and Leadership Team.
- Recognition of GRAN as having expertise on the human rights of older women in Africa by the public, civil society and political actors.

***“Not only is another world possible, she’s on her way.  
On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing”.***

-- Arundhati Roy --