



## GWI Update – 26 August 2015



### International News Round-Up: August 2015

**Expanding and improving the quality of girls' education in Afghanistan** (The Brookings Institute, 19 August)  
Afghanistan is a success story in increased availability of education and in the numbers of children attending school, girls included. The Afghan Ministry of Education estimates that there are presently 8.4 million students (39 % of which are girls) in primary and secondary schools, an impressive increase from an estimated 1 million students in 2001. However, only 21% of girls complete primary education, due to cultural barriers such as early marriage and a lack of female teachers. Other well-documented challenges for girls in education in Afghanistan include security and sanitation problems, as well as management capacity issues. Despite the difficulties, many opportunities exist, especially with potential to improve data collection, enhance partnerships across ministries and improve dialogue with civil society. [Read more.](#)

**Uganda court rules against refund of 'bride price' after divorce** (The Guardian, 17 August)  
Until last Thursday, if a marriage failed, some men would go back to the woman's family home to demand a return of their property. But the Supreme Court in Kampala has ruled, in a majority judgment of 6:1, that the traditional custom and practice of demanding a refund of the bride price if a marriage breaks down is unconstitutional and "dehumanising to women". According to UN figures, an estimated 40% of girls in Uganda are married before they are 18, with eastern and northern Uganda registering the highest number of child marriages. A major reason for the high number is understood to be because parents, particularly poorer parents, want to get the bride price. When married women who are abused complain, they are reminded about the property that was given to their parents and may feel compelled to stay if their parents are unable to pay back the bride price they received, say critics. [Read more](#)

**Female lecturers 'suffer from gender biases' in student ratings** (The Times UK, 14 August)  
Research from France offers evidence that "students appear to rate teachers according to gender stereotypes", with male students giving higher scores to male lecturers. That is the conclusion of a paper by Anne Boring, a postdoctoral researcher at L'Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris, better known as Sciences Po, to be presented at the European Economic Association's annual conference, which takes place in Mannheim later this month. Her database consists of 22,665 evaluations by 4,423 first-year undergraduates of 372 different teachers in a single university. Such differences have no basis in "actual teaching effectiveness", since "students perform equally well on final exams, whether the teacher was a man or a woman", she argues. [Read more](#)

### **Malala Yousafzai celebrates string of A\* grades at GCSE** (The Guardian, 21 August)

Even after winning a Nobel Peace Prize, with glittering invitations to speak to presidents across the world, education activist Malala Yousafzai always had one priority: her schoolwork. And the Pakistani pupil's dedication to her studies has paid off, according to her father Ziauddin Yousafzai, who tweeted that the 18-year-old had achieved six A\*s and four As when the GCSE results were released on Thursday. Malala has declined hundreds of speaking engagements and interviews in order not to miss a day of studying at her private girls' school in Birmingham. The family has set up home in the city since then 15-year-old Malala was treated at the city's Queen Elizabeth hospital. She came to the UK after being shot in the head on her school bus, targeted by Taliban gunman for her activism on girls' education, including a blog she wrote for BBC Urdu. [Read more.](#)

### **University of New South Wales (UNSW) moves to strengthen women's role in science** (Sydney Morning Herald, 17 August)

Here's a paradox. How does science move beyond the gender stereotypes holding women back even as it celebrates the particular qualities they bring to scientific endeavour? As National Science Week started, it was such matters that some of Australia's finest minds pondered at a University of NSW symposium celebrating women's leadership in science. "There is a paradox," Professor Emma Johnston said. Professor Johnston is head of the applied marine and estuarine ecology lab at UNSW and runs the Sydney Harbour Research Program at the Sydney Institute of Marine Science. "On the one hand we want to let more women into the system and we know that we need to change the system for that to happen. On the other hand we want the system itself to be accepting of women who are not necessarily 'super high caring'. We want them to be able to succeed in science as well. "So it's about increasing diversity. We don't want to constrain everybody to work within the stereotypes that already exist." [Read more](#)

### **The Push for a Woman to Run the United Nations** (New York Times, 22 August)

The United Nations has had eight secretaries general. All have been men. Each has been selected through back-room dealing dominated by the five world powers that hold permanent seats on the Security Council. It's time to change that. The appointment of the civil servant who serves as the next head of the United Nations should be more transparent. It would be powerfully symbolic to appoint a woman to the helm of an organization created 70 years ago to tackle the world's most pressing problems through diplomacy and global consensus. Encouragingly, both objectives are being championed this year with unprecedented vigor within the United Nations as the current Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon, moves toward the end of his second five-year term on December 31, 2016. [Read more](#)

### **Do more to support student mothers, universities told** (The Times UK, 19 August)

Universities should do more to support student mothers in order to reduce the number that drop out, a study says. Research by the Institute for Employment Research (IER) at the University of Warwick found that student mothers in the UK often enrolled with a specific job in mind such as midwifery or teaching but were often poorly informed about what these jobs entailed. As a result they frequently dropped out late in the degree or during a postgraduate year, with placements often representing a "crunch point" that some student mothers find particularly difficult to juggle with childcare and, in many cases, paid work. The study, which was funded by the Nuffield Foundation, was based on data from the Futuretrack study of graduates and interviews with student mothers. Clare Lyonette, principal research fellow at the IER, said that she recognised from her own experience as a student mother in the 1990s what an "amazing struggle" it could be. [Read more](#)



Empowering women and girls through lifelong education for leadership, decision-making and peace. GWI, formerly IFUW, is in special consultative status with ECOSOC and is an NGO maintaining official relations with UNESCO.

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