



# GWI ADVOCACY BASICS

## What is ADVOCACY?

*I speak - not for myself, but for all girls and boys. I raise up my voice – not so that I can shout, but so that those without a voice can be heard, those who have fought for their rights: their right to live in peace, their right to be treated with dignity, their right to equality of opportunity, their right to be educated. – Malala Yousafzai*

Advocacy can broadly be considered as “a process of influencing selected people or institutions in order to achieve policy, practice, social behavioural or political changes that will benefit a particular group”<sup>1</sup> (e.g. women’s rights) or improve a particular cause (e.g. climate change). Advocacy activities can be done on both a small and large scale, depending on the particular goal and objectives to be achieved.

### ADVOCACY AT GWI

Advocacy, as it pertains to GWI, is the process of promoting and advancing the rights of girls and women to access quality, lifelong education, which is a quintessential element of gender empowerment and equality. Through its membership base in over 100 countries, GWI is primed to represent the international voice for championing the academic, professional, social and personal advancement of girls and women globally.

### WHY THIS TOOLKIT?

The purpose of this toolkit is to support GWI’s members to develop and implement advocacy campaigns to influence local, national, regional and international stakeholders including policy makers, education providers, the private sector and civil society partners for increasing access of girls and women to quality secondary, tertiary, continuing and non-traditional education. In doing so, this toolkit aims to provide a clear understanding of what advocacy is and to explain how it can be effected at local, national, international and regional levels.

**FACT:** Where families are displaced from their homes, girls’ access to education often suffers as family resources are used for sons’ education, who are prioritised, while care responsibilities are entrusted to daughters.

**FACT:** Restrictive and discriminatory migration laws and policies are often a barrier of access to education. Uncertain legal status can significantly hinder the eligibility of migrants for enrolment in education programmes.

### *Advocacy requires patience!*

As advocacy is an on-going process, campaigns seldom produce immediate, tangible results. It can take months, years and even decades to achieve objectives and so it is important for members engaged in advocacy to be patient, persistent and fully committed. When advocacy campaigns do succeed, the results can bring about huge advancements to the lives of millions of people, who would otherwise remain side-lined by the status quo.

### **Success Story 1: The Girl Child**

The girl child, a topic that broadened the discussion and awareness of girls’ human rights, was formally introduced at the international level in January 1995 at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. GWI members were instrumental in the advocacy efforts to see the girl child given formal recognition and protection.

The next milestone in the international advocacy campaign was the creation by the United Nations in 2011 of International Day of the Girl Child. The marking of the day came about as a result of an advocacy campaign conducted by Plan International. The day, celebrated on October 11 every year, raises awareness of the systemic threats to girls’ human rights, gender inequalities, discrimination and abuses across the globe.



### **Success Story 2: Ageing Women**

While discussions concerning the rights of older persons at the first World Assembly on Ageing in Vienna began in 1983, it took many years for international mechanisms to recognise that ageing women in particular are prone to discrimination. This was identified during the Second World Assembly on Ageing (2002) as well as by the United Nations (UN) Committee

on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in General

Recommendation No. 27 (2010). Special interest groups such as Help Age International advocated strongly at the international level for the recognition, promotion and protection of the rights of ageing women.

The movement has since gained visibility and momentum, including most recently the appointment by the UN of an independent expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons (2013).



1. Ian Chandler, [www.thepressuregroup.org](http://www.thepressuregroup.org)

# When DO YOU ADVOCATE?

Depending on the level (local, national, international/regional) and objective (introduction of legislation, provision of services etc.) the timing and timelines can greatly vary in terms of when you should begin your activities and for how long they should last. As a general rule, the higher the level of advocacy and the broader the application of the desired objective, the earlier the campaign should be started and the longer it may take to produce a result. It may be relatively straightforward to initiate contact with the school board, principal and/or local government body who has the authority to build separate toilets. At the national level, efforts to convince the Minister for education to invest in national scholarships for female students in STEM may be a longer-term advocacy objective. Factors such as identifying the correct policy makers to approach, i.e. those who have influence with the minister, as well as the timelines for the drafting period of annual, national budgets need to be identified in advance in order to launch the advocacy activities during the relevant period. At the international/regional level, change tends to be made slowly. International policy makers are even further removed from day-to-day decision-making, and it can be difficult to identify and approach at this level given the myriad of bureaucratic processes involved in how the organisations work. Thus bringing a global issue to the attention of international policy makers may take years, especially as some political traditions may be less inclined to accept the arguments. As a minimum structure for a timeframe, international organisations and bodies that accept civil society input generally provide deadlines for submissions or may also provide opportunities to address its sessions at certain periods throughout the year.



# How DO YOU ADVOCATE?

Advocacy takes place on every level of policy-making including local, national, and regional and international. Each level has a specific tactic; however, the overall themes and general focuses remain the same. It begins with understanding and realising one's basic human rights. This will motivate and inspire people to speak out against violations of their rights or on behalf of others. Speaking out can include recounting personal stories, stories of others or educating others about their human rights. An increased knowledge and understanding will translate into mobilisation for action, which can be used to influence policy makers on the local, national, and regional and international levels and others within communities to join the advocacy campaign.

More participation in advocacy will accelerate change and development for the advancement of girls' and women's education. This tool kit, in three parts, will provide the practical measures required for advocacy at the local, national and international/regional levels.

## **GW I ADVOCACY PROCESS: FROM MEMBERS' RESOLUTION TO GW I POLICY**

**STEP 1**

During the General Assembly convened at the IFUW triennial conference, IFUW members propose resolutions relating to education, gender or women's rights.

**STEP 2**

The resolutions are discussed and adopted by the IFUW General Assembly; the themes of the resolutions become core areas of focus for the subsequent 3 year advocacy cycle.

**STEP 3**

IFUW prepares and publishes policy papers for each resolution. The policy papers clarify IFUW's position and contains recommendations for policy-makers and other stakeholders.

**STEP 4**

IFUW and its members present the IFUW policy papers during advocacy actions at the local, national and international levels.

# Why advocate for the EDUCATION OF WOMEN & GIRLS?

There are three distinct reasons to support girls' and women's access to quality, lifelong education:

## HUMAN RIGHTS

The right to education is an international human right and a key enabler of many other rights. It promotes and directly enhances the principles of non-discrimination and substantive gender equality. Systemic abuses that specifically affect women and girls such as gender-based violence, early, forced and child marriage, female genital mutilation, and human trafficking need to be addressed by providing human rights education (HRE) within school curricula and through local, national and international campaigns. To effect lasting changes, the dialogue must involve men and boys as well as leaders from all levels and strands of society. Literate, educated girls and women who understand their fundamental rights become empowered and more inclined to challenge social norms.



### STATISTIC

If all girls had a secondary education, there would be two-thirds fewer child marriages (UNESCO, 2011)

## THE BUSINESS CASE

Equal access to quality education for all is an essential element of economic growth. Increasing girls' and women's access to secondary, tertiary, continuing and non-traditional education is a critical means to empower them with the skills and knowledge necessary to enter professional careers. Educating girls and women expands a country's labour force, engages previously untapped talent, and ultimately increases Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This is critical for the development and long-term sustainability of national economies. Increasing the level of female employees within the workplace, especially in senior positions, allows innovation and talent to thrive and has been shown to increase productivity.



### STATISTIC

If women's paid employment rates were raised to the same level as men's, the United States' gross domestic product would be an estimated 9% higher, the euro zone's would climb by 13% and Japan's would be boosted by 16% (UN Women).



### STATISTIC

If all women had a secondary education, child deaths would be cut in half, saving 3 million lives, and 12 million children would be saved from stunting from malnutrition (UNESCO, 2011).

## SOCIAL CHANGE

Education improves the living conditions of women and benefits the communities in which they live. It enables women to contribute to household income and gives them greater influence in household negotiations. It also enables them to effectively care and provide for themselves and their children. Educated mothers are more informed about family planning, vaccinations and recognising and addressing health risks for children. Children of educated mothers are more likely to go to school, avoid early marriage, and have healthy children of their own when they are ready. As a result, educated women and girls are also an investment for future generations because an educated woman is more likely to value educating her daughters as well as her sons.



## Statistics about women's and girls' education

- Almost a quarter of young women aged 15-24 (about 116 million young women) in developing countries have never completed primary school, which significantly hinders their chances to find skilled work.
- Only 30% of all girls are enrolled in secondary school.
- Almost two-thirds of the 781 million illiterate people in the world are female.
- An extra year of secondary school increases a girl's potential income by 15 to 25%.
- An increase of only 1% in girls' secondary education attendance, adds 0.3% to a country's GDP.
- 1 in every 3 girls in the developing world is married by the age of 18.
- Each extra year of a mother's schooling cuts infant mortality by between 5 and 10%.
- Every year, 10 million girls are forced or coerced into marriage.
- For every US\$ 1 invested in girls' education there is a US\$10-15 return.

# Where DO YOU ADVOCATE?

GWI has national affiliates in 62 countries and individual members in more than 40 others. With such a large presence, advocacy campaigns can take place all over the world and on numerous platforms, depending on the level and aim of the objectives involved. Broadly speaking, members can engage in advocacy at a local, national and regional/international level. For example, arranging a meeting with community leaders to draw attention to a prevalent socio-cultural norm may be more useful to effect change than to advocate for the introduction of national legislation, which might not be practically implemented at the local level. On the other end of the scale, advocacy initiatives may also take the form of a multilateral campaign to encourage international policy makers to make commitments on a specific issue e.g. the human rights of the girl child.



## LOCAL

Effective advocacy often starts from grass-roots movements within local communities. By identifying challenges that restrict girls' and women's access to education within the community, members involved in local advocacy can often go directly to the stakeholder who can help alleviate the problem.

### Example:

*The local secondary school does not have gender-segregated toilets. Because of this, many teenage girls do not attend school for fear they may be the targets of sexual abuse or harassment. Rather than pushing for action on the national level, members could approach the relevant school authority to encourage them to commit to building appropriate facilities.*

## NATIONAL

Advocacy campaigns can transfer to the national level from a local level once communities increase pressure for action and change. Policy implications at the national level can also result from activity at the international/regional level which require national implementation. National advocacy is intended to target policy makers or engage and mobilise other stakeholders in a country-level activity.

### Example:

*The uptake of secondary and tertiary female students studying subjects related to science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) is significantly low across the country, especially when compared to the number of male students pursuing STEM. A national advocacy objective may be to lobby the Minister of education and Minister for industry to launch a governmental initiative, in partnership with nationwide secondary schools and universities to entice more girls and young women to enrol in STEM. This may include the provision of state- or industry-backed scholarships or work experience schemes.*

## REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL

The regional and international levels of advocacy generally target international policy makers, institutions and mechanisms, and as such are the highest levels of advocacy. It is the work of regional and international bodies to hold governments accountable for the national implementation of international legal commitments. Political pressure can be exercised by organisations such as the United Nations, the European Union, the African Union etc. on those states and regions that are more reluctant to accept change and to implement proper safeguards for their citizens. Where national-level advocacy has proved unsuccessful or would be unlikely to produce results, advocates may wish to target their advocacy campaigns towards these international policy makers.

### Example:

*Early, forced and child marriage is an issue that affects children – especially girls – in many countries across all regions. Many girls living in developed states are sent to developing countries and are forced into arranged marriages because of socio-cultural traditions. Advocacy activities at the international level to target this global issue could be the organisation of an international summit to draw the attention to it and to encourage the participation of global leaders and policy makers to make commitments to tackle the issue. (See *Girl Summit 2014* and the work of the civil society partnership group *Girls Not Brides*)*

