



Advocacy at INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL LEVELS

"To live is to choose. But to choose well you must know who you are and what you stand for, where you want to go and why you want to get there." – Kofi Annan, former Director-General of the United Nations

What is INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL ADVOCACY

Advocacy at the international and regional level seeks to influence the policy outcomes of international and regional organisations, institutions or bodies, which in turn impact on the policies and actions of national governments. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) like GWI engage in international advocacy with the aim of influencing international bodies, such as the United Nations and related agencies, in order to create changes in policies and actions that benefit girls and women.

The United Nations (UN) is made up of Member States, who develop and vote for resolutions, sign conventions, and enforce decisions in-country, so advocates must be aware of the political dimensions and the complexities of reaching multilateral consensus on sensitive issues. Advocates call upon representatives of Member States, either at the diplomatic missions based in UN centres such as Copenhagen, Geneva, Paris, Nairobi, New York, and Vienna, or at meetings and events within the UN agency network, to promote and protect certain rights, and to implement international conventions and laws. Official UN meetings and events require advocates to be from an organisation with an official relationship with that UN agency or body.

▶ Visit <http://csonet.org> to learn more about the United Nations (UN) and how NGOs can be involved in UN processes.

GWI is in special consultative status to the United Nations (UN) Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), is in official relations with UNESCO and the International Labour Organization (ILO), and has a working relationship with the International Telecommunications Union (ITU).

Advocating for GIRLS & WOMEN AT INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL LEVELS

There is a need for national and international commitments to gender equality in education, both to create a more equal world and to promote and encourage sustainable development globally.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development sets the global development agenda for the next fifteen years, with specific targets on secondary, tertiary and continuing education and the elimination of gender disparities:

Target 4.1. *By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.*

Target 4.3. *By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.*

Target 4.5. *By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.*

In order to reach these specific goals, governments need to be accountable and NGOs have a role to play in monitoring and reporting progress, and advocating to further the goal. NGOs and civil society groups have an important role in shaping the national and international agenda and policy dialogues.

At the World Education Forum in Incheon in 2015, the Framework for Action Education 2030 ("Education 2030") was adopted, which includes aims to improve both the quality of education and access to education by girls and women, and emphasises gender equality. There remain several points to advocate for, including:

- Public funding and improved access for girls to attend secondary school



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- Policy and practice for gender parity and gender equality in secondary and tertiary education
- Gender disaggregated data throughout all education levels (primary, secondary, tertiary)
- Implementing lifelong learning opportunities
- Specific countries to reach a minimum 6% spend of GDP on education

International and regional advocacy campaigns help global issues transcend national boundaries, by leveraging national knowledge and joining the voices of many to make a single strong advocacy push.

Example:

Early, forced and child marriage is an issue that affects children – especially girls in many countries across all regions. Africa is home to 15 out of 20 countries with the highest rates of child marriage, which often marks the end of a girl's education. The African Union has launched the first-ever Campaign to End Child Marriage in Africa in partnership with UNICEF and UNFPA, <http://pages.au.int/cecm>. Its focus is on accelerating change across the continent by encouraging African governments to develop strategies to raise awareness of and address the harmful impact of child marriage.

Many NGOs, including GWI, have been campaigning to stop child marriage. The more voices that join, the stronger the campaign.

Who is the TARGET AUDIENCE?

International and regional organisations are institutions whose membership consists of a number of different countries and transcends a single nation state. What distinguishes a regional organisation from an international one is that they are comprised of states or entities within a restrictive geographical or geopolitical boundary, for example the African Union (AU), European Union (EU), the Organization of American States (OAS), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Arab League, Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

International organisations are those with global mandates, generally funded by contributions from national governments. Examples include the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Organization for Migration, and United Nations agencies (*see below*). Generally speaking, the main stakeholders in international and regional level advocacy include: high-level government ministers (e.g. those attending UN missions); heads/representatives of international organisations (e.g. High Commissioners for human rights, refugees, Director-General of the International Monetary Fund, World Bank etc.), heads of multinational private sector (e.g. Unilever, Nestlé and other multinational corporations interested in Corporate Social Responsibility), as well as other international NGOs. At the international level, it is possible to target any of these stakeholders to build alliances, have common statements to submit to the UN meetings, share a voice in meetings and promote specific causes.

| Human Rights Treaty Bodies | The Human Rights Council |
|---|---------------------------|
| 10 HR Treaty bodies | Plenary sessions |
| The CEDAW Committee | Universal Periodic Review |
| 23 Independent experts | Special Procedures |
| Evaluation of the progress made from a gender perspective | Advisory Committee |
| 189 countries signed CEDAW | Complaint Procedure |

GWI fulfils its mandate in favour of girls' and women's education by advocating at the international level. This enables NFAs to use GWI's status as an accredited NGO (since 1947) to put forward their perspectives at the national level and speak with the voice of several tens of thousands of women whom GWI represents.

REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL STATISTICS ABOUT WOMEN AND GIRL'S EDUCATION

- There are 4 million more girls than boys out of primary school and 34 million female adolescents out of lower secondary school.
- The latest figures from UNESCO show that 781 million adults – of whom almost two-thirds are women – still lack basic reading and writing skills.
- If all women had a secondary education, the number of child deaths would be cut, saving 3 million lives.
- Despite the size of the global illiterate population shrinking, the female proportion has remained virtually steady at 63% to 64%.
- In 2012, the EU average gender pay gap between men and women was estimated at 16.4%.
- Graduation rates for women now average 87% compared with 81% for men in OECD countries. However, the employment rate is considerably higher among men (80%) than among women (65%), although the gap is narrowest among tertiary-educated individuals and widest among those without an upper secondary education.

How do you ADVOCATE?

Advocacy is about formal and informal routes to influence decisions towards a specific goal. Building relationships is an essential part of advocacy: meeting people, following up, providing useful information, and exchanging ideas. Informal advocacy is about building the organisation and its people as a trusted and reliable source of relevant information to influence decisions. Formal advocacy can take place through direct participation, for example oral or written submissions at sessions or summits of international or regional organisations. On a practical level, it is important to be prepared with a clear goal, and facts, figures, examples and stories to support your advocacy effort, and a simple outline of what you would like your advocacy target to do, using clear and concise language.

THE ADVOCACY PROCESS:

Aim ► policy/action needed to achieve it ► benefits of that policy/action for stakeholders involved ► communicating so that decision-makers understand the benefits ► develop community pressure ► change ► measure results.

GWI publishes online policy updates and policy papers dealing with themes and issues related to the empowerment of girls and women through lifelong education. These policy updates are structured to guide GWI members on how to engage with certain themes or issues. They include concrete recommendations for policymakers and other stakeholders on issues of education, gender and human rights.

Role of GWI & NFAS

The principal role is to verify that the commitments signed by a government are implemented on the ground

At the **international level** the UN representatives participate in the elaboration of policy papers and other documents to be agreed, on the basis of GWI priorities and resolutions and taking into account specific arguments from the NFAs.

At the **national level** the NFAs can:

- Inform their members and their community when a new international agreement is announced, infringed or not implemented.
- Write position papers and articles in the media
- Organise conferences and/or round-table discussions
- Lobby their government
- Engage with other NGOs to increase support for a given advocacy goal

UN TERMINOLOGY

CONSULTATIVE STATUS

Consultative status provides NGOs with access to ECOSOC and its many subsidiary bodies, to the various human rights mechanisms of the United Nations, as well as to special events organised by the President of the General Assembly. (See Chapter X, Article 71 of the United Nations Charter.)

SIDE EVENTS

Side events provide a platform for governments, civil society organisations, private sector, community representatives, international and national organisations, academia, international and regional finance institutions, and other United Nations entities to debate, showcase or present their views. For a side event, a partner diplomatic mission or UN agency must be involved.

PARALLEL EVENTS

Beside the side events, a number of other high-level events also take place outside the United Nations venue organised by governments or stakeholders and revolving around different themes. Programmes and projects, as well as global and regional networks of partners take the opportunity to meet and advance in the debate on the subject in a parallel event, using a major UN event as an opportunity to attract a high-level audience.

HIGH LEVEL SEGMENT

The ECOSOC High Level Segment comprises three forums for policymakers to meet:

- A) High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) provides political leadership, guidance and recommendations for sustainable development, follow-up and review progress in the implementation of sustainable development commitments;
- B) Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) assesses progress in the implementation of the United Nations development agenda;
- C) Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) reviews trends and progress in development cooperation on a biannual basis.

Example:

A side event was held by GWI (then IFUW) during the 2013 Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) High Level Segment meeting to focus on women in STEM. The Directors-General of UNESCO and CERN were present, as was the Director for Strategy of the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) and a representative from for-profit company Cisco. This led on the one hand to recommendations on how to address encouraging more women in STEM and on the other opened the door to GWI participating in other ITU programmes such as Girls in ICT Day (see more at: <http://girlsinct.org/resources/269/international-girls-ict-day-2015-toolkit>) through which GWI can continue to advocate for equal access to quality STEM education for girls and women.



Where do you ADVOCATE?



When do you ADVOCATE?

In terms of advocating for the education of girls and women, relevant international and regional institutions include the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the UN Human Rights Council (HRC), UN Committee for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), International Labour Organization (ILO), International Telecommunication Union (ITU), UN Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC). These are all institutions with which GWI is in regular contact, both directly and through the UN representatives based in Geneva, New York, Paris and Vienna.

Regional institutions include the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), Inter-American Court of Human Rights and the African Court of Human Rights. Regional systems have slightly different bodies and mechanisms that can be used to advance the cause and which monitor human rights.

Special Rapporteurs, who are independent experts appointed by the Human Rights Council to examine and report back on a country situation or a specific human rights theme, also encourage NGOs to submit information to them that relates to their mandate.

GWI has dedicated volunteers, called UN representatives, in four UN centres: Geneva, New York, Paris and Vienna. These representatives attend meetings, advocate, strengthen the network and present oral statements on behalf of GWI and its NFAs.

International Alliances - CHARGE

International alliances provide the opportunity to join with other organisations that share common goals to build visibility and promote these goals together. For example, GWI is a member of the Collaborative for Harnessing Ambition and Resources for Girls' Education (CHARGE), a collaboration of more than 30 civil society organisations, companies, multilaterals and governments to improve learning and leadership opportunities for young women and girls. The collective effort of CHARGE aims to reach 14 million girls over five years, focusing on five priority areas:

- Ensure that girls can attend and complete primary and secondary school
- Make schools safer and more secure
- Improve the quality of learning for girls
- Support girls' transition to higher education and employment
- Cultivate local country leaders to champion this work at the grassroots level

As an official partner, GWI has pledged to increase the number of qualified female secondary school teachers in sub-Saharan Africa to provide 15,000 girls with improved, high quality learning opportunities. In addition, GWI will support the transition of 10,000 girls from secondary school to university or work over the next five years through a mentoring programme.

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. For a comprehensive calendar outlining the different sessions please click on the following links:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/Meetings.aspx>

<http://www.ilo.org/gb/GBSessions/GB323/lang--en/index.htm>

<http://esango.un.org/irene/ecosoc.html?page=calendarList>

Some cycles, such as the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) at the Human Rights Council or the CEDAW reviews at the UN, allow for NGO consultation and feedback. NFAs should become involved in this, as they monitor and evaluate the human rights in their own country. This needs to be done well in advance of the review cycle. These are opportunities for NFAs to put themselves in the spotlight while substantively advocating for change.

The Mexican Federation of University Women (FEMU), for example, was instrumental in shaping the Mexican national report at the UPR process in 2013, in collaboration with other Mexican NGOs.

Advocacy is successful because of facts, relationships, luck and timing. It is therefore imperative that relationships are nurtured and sustained over time, with regular touch points and meetings outside official events.

Advocating WITH OTHERS

One of the ways to advocate effectively is to have many voices join a single cause through an alliance. The focus of an alliance is the cause; the advocacy is done with a single voice representing many. The following principles are important to consider when building or joining an alliance:

- Focus on the common goal and define it clearly
- Define how you will work together
- Clarify roles, responsibilities and timelines
- Develop measurements to assess progress
- Play to alliance strengths
- Promote collaborative behaviour between parties
- Communicate inside your own organisation on the overall goals and progress of the alliance

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