

The International Federation of University Women (IFUW) calls on governments and policy makers to commit to immediate, concrete legislative and result-orientated action for the eradication of illiteracy, especially amongst girls and women

Geneva, Switzerland, 08 September 2014 – Today, on [International Literacy Day](#), the International Federation of University Women ([IFUW](#)) calls on all governments, regional and international policy makers as well as other educational bodies to take all steps necessary to eradicate illiteracy. Action must include drafting and implementing legislation and concrete policy frameworks that specify measurable goals and benchmarks to tackle the global literacy shortfall. All programmes for action must recognise and make provision for the increased vulnerability of girls and women, who account for two-thirds of the 774 million illiterate people in the world.¹

IFUW President Catherine Bell highlighted the need for urgency in addressing the issue, emphasising that “literacy is the key to realising sustainable local, national, regional and international development and enabling the vulnerable groups of society to lift themselves out of the poverty trap. Girls and women are disproportionately affected by illiteracy, which perpetuates their position of socio-economic vulnerability and dependency, and further exacerbates the global gap in gender equality.”

In today’s technological age, where the distribution of knowledge is no longer limited to formal instruction and institutions, it is essential that all groups of society, especially rural, indigenous and disabled girls and women, are included in local, national and international literacy campaigns. The statistics remain gravely concerning: literacy rates amongst women with disabilities may be as low as 1%.² Reading, writing and numeracy skills have a “multiplier effect” in that they are essential to eradicate poverty, reduce child mortality, curb population growth, achieve gender equality and ensure sustainable development, peace and democracy.³

The International Federation of University Women ([IFUW](#)) is based in Geneva, Switzerland, and has an international membership. Founded in 1919, IFUW is the leading girls’ and women’s global organisation advocating for women’s rights, equality and empowerment through access to quality education and training up to the highest levels. IFUW is in special consultative status with ECOSOC and is an NGO maintaining official relations with UNESCO.

Learn about our grants & fellowships and our advocacy work. Follow us on Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter (@IFUWomen)

- ends -

For more information please contact: Aoife Hegarty, T: +41 22 731 23 80;
Email: ah@ifuw.org

¹ UNESCO (2013) <http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/ED/GMR/images/2011/girls-factsheet-en.pdf>.

² UNDP (1998) <http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?navid=33&pid=18>.

³ UNESCO “Literacy for All” <http://en.unesco.org/themes/literacy-all>.