



Press Release

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On International Literacy Day GWI Keenly Encourages States to Close the Digital Gender Gap

Geneva, Switzerland, 8 September 2017 - Today Graduate Women International (GWI) celebrates International Literacy Day, a day dedicated to engaging and mobilizing the international community to promote literacy as an instrument to empower women and girls. As girls' education advocates, GWI is encouraged by the day's 2017 theme "[literacy in a digital world](#)," in which UNESCO aims "to look at what kind of literacy skills people need to navigate increasingly digitally-mediated societies and to explore effective literacy policies."

Despite global efforts, the universal Internet user gender gap grew from 11% in 2013 to 12% in 2016, with the estimated gap highest in Least Developed Countries (LDCs) (31%) and Africa (23%) (UNESCO). Internet usage rates remain higher for men than women in all regions of the world. In a world where digital technologies are increasing at a rapid rate, GWI remains concerned that women and girls denied digital literacy, are side-lined in society and business for lacking the knowledge, skills and competencies to compete as a digital citizen.

"With digital literacy becoming almost as important as traditional literacy, GWI is pleased to participate in this year's International Literacy Day. Upskilling women and girls in the digital sector remains of high importance to GWI and we continue this commitment alongside our National Federations and Associations worldwide," said Geeta Desai, GWI president.

According to the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), some 90% of jobs worldwide possess a digital component. Through advocacy work, GWI encourages governments to equip girls with digital and Information Communication Technology (ICT) skills by prioritising education in ICT subjects. This concentration on girls' access to digital literacy will help ensure girls thrive in economies where routine work has been automated and digital skills are increasingly valued. GWI underscores that digital literacy training opens the door to other essential skills needed to function in society, such as financial literacy and mainstream career training. Such training enables women to set up online businesses and social networking sites, and to boost their social livelihood and economic activity. Today, GWI celebrates the ITU who have trained over 1,000,000 women to become digitally literate and UNESCO's [International Literacy Prizes](#) that have rewarded excellence and innovation in the field of literacy since 1967.

GWI recognizes the interrelated roles governments, the private sector, NGOs, and academia play in closing the digital gender gap. Working together in terms of collecting and analysing sex-disaggregated data will provide detailed evidence and identify processes for the improvement of women and girls' digital literacy. GWI calls on multi-stakeholder cooperation to develop tools and policies that support national and international efforts, and effective sharing of best practices to address the digital gender gap. GWI anticipates influencing policy so that it integrates digital gender equality targets and key performance indicators into strategies, policies and budgets that involve women. Collectively, our action aims to confront barriers that impede gender equality online, including affordable access, issues around cyber safety and security, and digital literacy.

About GWI

Graduate Women International (GWI) is a membership-based international NGO based in Geneva, Switzerland, with presence in over 80 countries. Founded in 1919, GWI 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. GWI is in special consultative status with ECOSOC since 1947 and is an NGO maintaining official relations with UNESCO and ILO.

Learn about our [advocacy work](#). Follow us on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter \(@GradWomen\)](#); For more information please contact: Stacy Dry Lara, Executive Director, Graduate Women International, T: +41 22 731 23 80; Email: sdl@graduatewomen.org
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