



GRADUATE WOMEN
INTERNATIONAL (GWI)

Chemin du Grand-Montfleury, 48
CH-1290 Versoix, Geneva
Switzerland
www.graduatewomen.org

GWIMANIFESTO

Continuing education for women

Graduate Women International (GWI), founded in 1919, is a worldwide, non-governmental organisation of women graduates, advocating for women's rights, equality, and empowerment through access to quality secondary, tertiary, continuing and non-traditional education.

Continuing learning is the ongoing, voluntary, and self-motivated pursuit of formal and informal knowledge throughout a woman's lifespan, including learning new skills within the workplace. It enhances social inclusion, active citizenship, personal development, self-esteem and sustainability. It occurs within the context of everyday social, family, situational and workplace interactions and in wider society. GWI believes that education is a continuous process of empowerment and self-improvement, where everyone - regardless of gender, age or background - is entitled to strive for and achieve full academic, personal and social advancement. Means and methods of continuing education must respond to the needs of the individual, where vulnerable groups of society must be catered for and included in national policy to reduce inequalities and knowledge disparity. Considerations such as gender, socio-economic background, physical and mental disability, and challenges faced by minorities must feature in the overall education and training campaigns and programmes. Similarly, all women in the work place, regardless of seniority or position, are entitled to access continuing education to keep them active, employed and employable. Due to the advances in technology, continuing learning is no longer confined to a specific place or time. For its part, GWI has launched several projects, in cooperation with its national federations and associations, which aim to promote continuing education and skills for girls and women. Continuing education is both a means of empowerment and an investment in tomorrow's future leaders and decision makers.

GWI identifies several barriers that hinder women from accessing quality continuing education. These include:

- Stigma associated with disability which results in discrimination in the work place, despite official policies of equal opportunity.
- Ageism towards older employees which results in organisations and workplaces being less inclined to invest in courses and training for employees whom they see as having a limited working lifespan.
- Domestic responsibilities and lack of social infrastructure to allow women to balance work/family commitments, including expensive childcare, impractical school timetables, etc.
- Lack of legislation to provide men with leave from work to take care of the family, while women pursue careers and education.
- Economic barriers, especially in terms of voluntary continuing education, which are particularly problematic for vulnerable women, including those from developing, indigenous, minority and rural communities.
- Lack of technological infrastructure in developing and rural communities which limits the accessibility to distance learning.

GWI AND ITS NATIONAL FEDERATIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS HAVE DEVELOPED AND IMPLEMENTED NUMEROUS LIFE SKILLS AND LEARNING PROJECTS, INCLUDING:

▶ **JOB SEARCH SKILLS FOR YOUNG CAMBODIAN WOMEN**

(Graduate Women-Cambodia, GW-C)

▶ **IMPROVING THE LIVES OF WOMEN THROUGH LITERACY AND NUMERACY**

(Sierra Leone Association of University Women, SLAUW)

▶ **ENTREPRENEUR KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS FOR SCHOOL CHILDREN AND SCHOOL DROPOUTS IN URBAN AND SEMI-URBAN COMMUNITIES IN UGANDA**

(Uganda Association of University Women, UAUW)



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GWI calls on governments, education sectors, civil society and the private sector to take collective responsibility to:

- Establish nationally funded education systems to provide learning opportunities for women to upgrade and refresh their skills.
- Facilitate access to distance learning by audio-visual means, internet streaming or by deploying mobile classrooms and educators.
- Provide formal and informal learning opportunities for minorities such as indigenous communities, immigrants, refugees and women whose lives have been disrupted by war, imprisonment and environmental disasters.
- Legislate to ensure that educational institutes recognise the learning capabilities of women with disabilities and that they are provided with a supportive learning environment for their needs.
- Encourage businesses to invest in women's training at all stages of their working life, including by ensuring equal opportunity for women and men to access vocational programmes and workshops.
- Promote and facilitate equal opportunities for women in leadership, peace keeping and decision making.



- Build a stronger and more resilient society by upgrading the skills of women and girls in areas such as science and the technical trades.
- Fund and provide training in human rights education for women and girls.

GWI ENCOURAGES THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CONTINUING FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING AND TRAINING PROGRAMMES FOR WOMEN INCLUDING:

- Distance learning institutes and facilities, which provide girls and women with the opportunity to access education and training, where they would otherwise be unable to do so due to personal commitments including work and caring for the family, as well as living in remote locations or other mobility issues
- Workshops and courses to help prepare women for the job market, where the emphasis is on developing communication and negotiation skills and instilling confidence and self-belief
- Ongoing educational support and training for vulnerable girls and women, including victims of war, refugees and displaced persons greatly improves social cohesion and integration within society
- Digital tools and media that encourage formal learning