



GRADUATE WOMEN  
INTERNATIONAL (GWI)

Chemin du Grand-Montfleury, 48  
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[www.graduatewomen.org](http://www.graduatewomen.org)

# GWIMANIFESTO

## Non-traditional education for girls and 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.

One form of non-traditional education is the acquiring of knowledge and skills through learning methods that extend beyond formal means, institutions and sectors. Advancements in technology have yielded several contemporary methods of learning including through distance-learning and online courses, as well as educational radio programmes, podcasts and mobile device applications. In terms of informal education environments, these include non-institution based learning, where hands-on work experience in a particular field should be recognised and counted towards formal qualification requirements. Similarly, there are many women managing home economies and developing competencies that can be used in entrepreneurial settings, though this still remains a largely untapped resource for development. Career gender stereotyping and socio-cultural norms that typecast men and women into different professions have resulted in a distinctive gender gap in certain sectors, where women are particularly underrepresented in innovation-related industries. There is also a gender imbalance in politics and government, even though parliaments with more women consider a broader range of issues and adopt more legislation on health, education, anti-discrimination and child support. Non-traditional education, therefore, also aims to promote the participation, integration and balancing of the male and female workforces across all sectors. Empowering women through education, including through accessing contemporary forms of learning, enables them to access these non-traditional livelihoods. This is essential for women to attain more choice and independence in their lives, including substantive gender equality\* and equal pay for work of equal value.\*\*

Barriers for women in pursuing non-traditional education:

- Domestic responsibilities and lack of social infrastructure to allow women to balance work/family commitments, including expensive childcare, impractical school timetable etc.
- Lack of legislation to provide men with leave from work to take care of the family, while women pursue careers and education.
- Skills and competencies developed through non-institutional learning, including informal or domestic work experience, are often undervalued or disregarded in favour of academic qualifications.
- Vulnerable women - including those from developing countries, from economically weak positions and from rural or indigenous backgrounds - often do not have the requisite resources, pathways and infrastructure to access the technology necessary to receive training and learn new skills.
- Disabled girls and women face additional barriers of access to non-traditional education, given ill-adapted facilities and inaccessible teaching methods.
- Entrepreneurial and advanced business skills training have traditionally been aimed at, and taught by, men.
- Where women do pursue non-traditional careers, there are often still inequalities in pay, career promotion and working conditions when compared with male counterparts.
- Certain traditions and cultural norms stream girls and boys into different academic fields of learning. Academic subjects within science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) have historically had an overrepresentation of male students, while social sciences including home economics have been predominantly studied by girls and women.
- Lack of access to electricity and suitable broadband prevents women and girls from accessing online, mobile and other forms of electronic learning.

- ▶ **CONVINCED THAT** EDUCATION IS NOT ONLY LIMITED TO FORMAL LEARNING INSTITUTIONS BUT IS ALSO DEVELOPED THROUGH PRACTICAL, LIFE EXPERIENCE ACCUMULATED FROM A MULTITUDE OF SETTINGS
- ▶ **CONCERNED THAT** STRICT REQUIREMENTS OF FORMAL, ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS SIGNIFICANTLY HINDER THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND ADVANCEMENT OF INFORMALLY EDUCATED WOMEN
- ▶ **EMPHASISING** THE CRITICAL ROLE OF TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENT IN PROVIDING ALTERNATIVE, CONTEMPORARY METHODS OF EDUCATION - ESPECIALLY INSTRUMENTAL IN PROVIDING LEARNING RESOURCES TO ISOLATED COMMUNITIES



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### Increasing access to non-traditional education for girls and women

GWI, in cooperation with its national federations and associations, calls on governments, education sectors, civil society and the private sector to take collective responsibility to:

- **Implement policies, supported by appropriate legislation, monitoring and enforcement to remove barriers to non-traditional careers, including by providing childcare and support, and equal pay for work of equal value.**
- **Put into place initiatives to both formalise and recognise skill sets acquired through informal education and experience, including recognition of prior learning, qualification transfer systems, vocational training and accelerated certification programmes.**
- **Expand formal education programmes so that more institutions offer distance-learning, online and mobile learning, part-time and evening courses to facilitate extracurricular responsibilities of girls and women in all disciplines.**
- **Invest in and provide affordable and accessible internet access and learning technologies (including web-ready devices and radios) for all girls and women, and in particular rural, indigenous and economically vulnerable girls and women.**
- **Provide tailored means of non-traditional education for women with disabilities, including by investing in appropriate technology and teaching methods so that they are empowered to realise their full educational and professional potential.**
- **Launch national campaigns that showcase strong female role models, leadership and expertise, especially within non-traditional sectors, including by developing mentoring programmes.**
- **Introduce community-based business and entrepreneurship workshops specifically targeted towards women, which focus on financial literacy and business acumen.**
- **Encourage investment from the private sector to sponsor scholarships and training opportunities for women in non-traditional fields.**

\*Substantive Equality is the standard adopted by the UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). See General recommendation No. 25, on article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, on temporary special measures, 2004, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/453882a7e0.html>

\*\* The principle of equal pay for men and women for work of equal value is enshrined in the International Labour Organization Convention on Equal Remuneration (No.100) [1951].

### GWI EMPHASISES THREE CORE, IMMEDIATE AREAS FOR INVESTMENT AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE REALISATION OF NON-TRADITIONAL EDUCATION FOR GIRLS AND WOMEN:

- **Distance Learning:** radio- and web-based qualifications such as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) provide an invaluable opportunity for girls and women to access knowledge where physical, institutional presence is not possible
- **Education technologies:** Education-orientated mobile device applications, e-books and interactive learning programmes offer far-reaching and instantly accessible sources of knowledge
- **Non-traditional professions:** Encouraging more women into fields such as STEM results in increased innovation, competitiveness, creativity and long-term development. A more diverse workforce is stronger, more flexible and overall better to meet the challenges of the future.