



GRADUATE WOMEN  
INTERNATIONAL (GWI)

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

# GWIMANIFESTO

## Quality secondary education for girls & 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.

GWI sees access to, and completion of, quality secondary education as a critical means to empower girls and women by providing them with skills and knowledge - academic, social and personal - that they will bring from adolescence to adulthood. Basic literacy and numeracy skills are not enough; quality second-level education provides girls and young women with the tools that are vital to progress further in higher education, work and society. The seven domains of learning should be included within secondary school curricula: physical well-being; social and emotional; culture and the arts; literacy and communication; learning approaches and cognition; numeracy and mathematics; science and technology.\*

### Barriers to accessing secondary education for girls and women

GWI identifies several barriers that hinder girls and women from accessing quality secondary education. These include:

- Early and forced marriage (child marriage).
- Living in conflict zones: where instruction may have been suspended, where it is unsafe to access schools or where students have been displaced.
- Threat of physical or sexual violence, bullying or harassment, while travelling to or from school or while on school premises.
- A lack of suitable and safe sanitation facilities can often result in girls staying at home during menstruation.
- A shortage of female teachers or female-only schools in places where sex segregation is required for girls to attend schools.
- Cultural prejudice regarding the role of women in society that prevents girls from accessing education due to a responsibility to undertake domestic duties and caregiving.
- A need to travel significant distances to reach secondary school, particularly in rural areas.
- Curricula that do not meet the specific linguistic or other needs of girls from certain vulnerable groups, including ethnic and indigenous minorities.
- Disabled girls face multiple barriers to education including inaccessible or difficult to access premises and facilities, as well as ill-adapted teaching methods.
- Teenage pregnancy which can discourage young women from continuing or completing education, where social stigma or school policy can inhibit the possibility to attend or complete secondary school.

▶ **DEEPLY CONCERNED**  
THAT THERE ARE 34 MILLION\*  
ADOLESCENT GIRLS OUT OF  
SCHOOL

▶ **COMMITTED** TO ENSURING  
THAT BASIC EDUCATION  
SHOULD EXTEND TO  
SECONDARY EDUCATION

▶ **CONVINCED** THAT QUALITY  
SECONDARY EDUCATION  
EMPOWERS GIRLS AND WOMEN,  
ECONOMICALLY, SOCIALLY AND  
PERSONALLY

\*UNESCO Institute for Statistics and the Center for Universal Education at the Brookings Institution (2013) Toward Universal Learning Recommendations from the Learning Metrics Task Force

(\*UNESCO, 2013)



GRADUATE WOMEN  
INTERNATIONAL (GWI)

Chemin du Grand-Montfleury, 48  
CH-1290 Versoix, Geneva  
Switzerland  
[www.graduatewomen.org](http://www.graduatewomen.org)

# GWIMANIFESTO

## Quality secondary education for girls & women

### Increasing access to secondary education for girls and women

GWI, in cooperation with its national federations and associations, advocates for safe access to quality secondary education for all girls and women. To achieve this aim, GWI calls on all **governments, education sectors and civil society** to take collective responsibility to:

- Ensure that cultural and traditional practices do not detract from girls' and women's right to access quality secondary education; this includes combatting child marriage by increasing protection for victims under national legislation and by adopting and adhering to international legal standards.
- Include all stakeholders in curriculum development and delivery of secondary education, including parents, communities, teachers and the private sector.
- Develop modern, gender-neutral curricula, which include human rights education and sexual health education, and which comply with international standards of quality education.
- Ensure that the curricula are of a level and quality where they reflect the academic requirements necessary and prepare students for enrolment into universities and other institutions, with particular emphasis on accessibility for girls and women.
- Commit to teacher recruitment and training to meet a looming global shortfall; appropriately train teachers for indigenous, disabled, language minorities and other vulnerable or marginalised groups.
- End gender-stereotyping and streaming of girls and women into certain fields during secondary school; promote education in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) for girls and women, as well as non-traditional fields of knowledge.
- Ensure access to secondary education in those sectors of society where women and girls are most marginalised through natural disaster, war, genocide and post-conflict dislocation.
- Include reporting procedures for gender-based violence, including when experienced on school premises or while travelling to or from school.

### GWI CALLS FOR THE REALISATION OF THE FOLLOWING STAND-ALONE GOALS IN SECONDARY EDUCATION FOR GIRLS AND WOMEN:

- Implement universal access to free, quality secondary education
- Provide financial incentives and support to keep girls from the poorest families in school
- Pay teachers competitive salaries and provide suitably high levels of training

