



Graduate Women
International (GWI)

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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On World Book and Copyright Day Graduate Women International appeals to governments and policy makers to reduce illiteracy rates for girls to ensure all stories can be told

Geneva, Switzerland, 23 April, 2018 – [World Book and Copy Right Day](#) celebrates the power of books and reading for the knowledge they share, creativity they spark and worlds they open. As this year is the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UNESCO is focusing this annual celebration on the right of all people to literacy.

On World Book and Copyright Day, Graduate Women International (GWI) calls attention to the **76 million girls**, out of **123 million children**, worldwide that are [illiterate](#). [Literacy enables women](#) to enhance their participation in making decisions regarding themselves and their families, reduces women's risk of maternal and infant mortality as well as their vulnerability to domestic abuse and can improve their earning potential by **up to 95%**. Moreover, ensuring that women from all areas and walks of life are literate ensures that their valuable stories can be shared.

“Every country government must recognize that availability and access to books and the freedom and ability to read them is indispensable to human development. Books and the people who read them have the power to transform lives, families, communities and countries for the better”, says GWI President, Geeta Desai.

In order for women and girls of all races, religions, ages, abilities, sexualities and walks of life to share their stories with the world, they must have the chance to become literate. GWI encourages governments, policy makers, and civil society to work towards achieving [Sustainable Development Goal 4.6](#), which aims for complete literacy and numeracy amongst youths by the year 2030. Governments must embrace working with nongovernmental organizations such as GWI who can advance efforts to provide the necessary channels for women and girls to have access to safe and equal education. Education supplies girls with tools and skills needed to improve the world and their place within it.

Governments must institutionalize the goal of 100% literacy for their citizens within their macroeconomic policies and must invest in digital and media technologies that assist in literacy development so that their societies can, at once, close existing literacy and digital divides”, adds Desai.

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.

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