



Press Briefing

International Day of Education

24 January 2019



The crucial role of women's and girls' education for the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The 2030 Agenda and its centrepiece, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), call for a transformation of the way societies interact with the planet and each other. This transformation requires new technologies, new ways of structuring societies and economies and, above all else, innovative and equal educational opportunities. The Graduate Women International (GWI) international network of graduate women is brought together by one core belief: that every women and girls have the right to equal access to education in all domains and at the highest levels. We advocate for education as both a fundamental human right and a key enabler to achieving economic growth and sustainable development. Yet, 130 million girls globally are out of school and 15 million girls of primary school age will never even enter a classroom. Today, according to UNESCO, of the world's 774 million illiterate adults, 2/3 are women.

On 3 December 2018, the United Nations General Assembly adopted with consensus a resolution proclaiming 24 January as International Day of Education, in celebration of the role of education for peace and development. By doing so, the international community reiterated the indispensable role that education plays in building educated and sustainable societies. To mark the inauguration of this momentous day, GWI highlights the fundamental need to provide universal, safe and equal access to education up to the highest level to all women and girls.

Women are not only half the world's population but are also often disproportionately affected by many of the global challenges faced, especially education barriers. This positions women and girls with a unique set of experiences, needs, and perspectives that must be recognized and addressed as we seek to realize a more just and sustainable future. Girls and women, both young and ageing, are sources of knowledge, expertise, and solutions that must be considered. Let's consider the links between women and girls' education and the SDGs:



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Globally, 1 in 5 girls are in households living on less than US\$1.90 a day, a sum that often leaves them without food, housing, health care or education. Ensuring girls access to schooling is key to eradicating global poverty, according to the World Bank, who says better educated women tend to be healthier, participate more in formal labour markets, have fewer children and marry later.



An estimated 60% of the world's hungry are women. At the same time, women are also critical to food and nutrition security due to the ever-growing role they play in food production. Improving the nutritional status of women can also lead to better education and higher incomes – raising the social standing of women in their communities.



Education is the foundation of health and well-being. Statistics from UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report show that the attainment of higher levels of education among mothers improves children's nutrition and vaccination rates, while reducing preventable child deaths, maternal mortality and HIV.



Every additional year of primary school increases girls' eventual wages by 10-20 percent; encourages them to marry later, have fewer children, and leaves them less vulnerable to violence. Yet, more than 48 per cent of girls remain out of school in some regions.



Gender inequality is demonstrated in many forms, including income disparities, wage discrimination, sexual suppression, gender roles and gender violence. Educated girls are able to form the next generation of women leaders and make revolutionary advances toward bridging the gender gap.



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6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



Water scarcity, poor water quality and inadequate sanitation negatively impact educational opportunities for girls across the world. Clean water consequently improves school attendance and builds better futures. Educated girls are more likely to learn about hygiene and improved water sanitation through schools or other programs.

7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY



Educated women and girls are more innovative and likely to develop new ideas towards affordable clean energy in their communities. Today, women hold only 20-24 percent of jobs in the renewable energy sector. Efforts to ensure women reap the benefits of the green economy must come earlier in life as increased investments in their access to quality education as girls.

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



Amongst the targets of SDG8 are the eradication of forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking. When women and girls have access to safe and quality education, they are less likely to fall victims of trafficking and forced labour. Education also enables women to gain the skills and training necessary to break out of these circles and the multiple dangers that go with it.

9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE



Gender inclusion and diversity benefit greatly innovation-driven economies like the global technology market. According to studies, companies ranking in the top 25% in terms of diversity are more likely to have financial returns above the medians of their industries. Increasing gender diversity in the workforce starts by providing equal access to all areas of education and training to all women and girls.

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



Educating women and girls changes the lifestyle of communities and increases equality. Education is a cornerstone for improving both social justice and economic productivity for women and girls and their communities.



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**11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES
AND COMMUNITIES**



For world societies to grow responsibly, intelligent urban planning that creates safe, affordable and resilient cities with green and culturally inspiring living conditions is required. Increasing women's and girls' education opportunities contributes to the likelihood that communities grow into maintainable populations.

**12 RESPONSIBLE
CONSUMPTION
AND PRODUCTION**



Producing and consuming in unsustainable ways drives climate change and the destruction of the environment. Access to information is critical for women and girls to understand how to adapt to a changing climate resulting in more responsible consumption.

**13 CLIMATE
ACTION**



Increased access to education is key to tackling climate change, not least because women and girls contribute to a better understanding of the impacts of climate change on communities resulting in a more effective and sustainable response to the climate change threat.

**14 LIFE
BELOW WATER**



As much as 40% of the world's oceans are heavily affected by human activities, including pollution, depleted fisheries and loss of coastal habitats. Reductions in pollution and controls on overfishing help girls and women living in the poorest fishing communities improve their standards of living and education enrolment.

**15 LIFE
ON LAND**



Women and girls living in the areas most affected by climate change are more affected by droughts and food insecurity. Women and girls have the right to be included in decision-making about their ecosystems and to be seen as essential players in preserving our planet.



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16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



According to the UNDP, women and girls who receive an education are more likely to seek justice and tackle prejudices such as gender violence, domestic violence or other injustices as they are more aware of their rights. According to Global Partnership for Education, increasing the global enrolment rate for secondary school by 10%, will reduce the risk of war by 3%.

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



Women and girls are affected by all 17 SDGs and all actions within must be gender-sensitive if we are to lead to a more equally beneficial existence. Transdisciplinary and universal access to sustainable development education for all, including women and girls is vital in order to build global awareness of the vital need for a universal partnership towards the achievement of all SDGs.

About GWI

Graduate Women International (GWI) is a membership-based international NGO based in Geneva, Switzerland, with presence in some 60 countries with our NFAs and Independent Members. Founded in 1919, GWI is the leading girls' and women's global organization 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 in an NGO maintaining official relations with UNESCO and ILO.

GWI operates with a small yet dedicated staff consisting of an Executive Director, a Junior Office Administrator, and a host of committed interns and volunteers. Additionally, our work is possible with the support of our tireless Board of Directors.

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