



Graduate Women
International (GWI)

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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On World Book and Copyright Day, Graduate Women International Calls for an End to Gender Bias in Textbooks

Geneva, Switzerland, 23 April 2019 — Graduate Women International (GWI) joins in celebrating World Book and Copyright Day: a day created by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to celebrate reading, publishing and copyright. This year, GWI raises awareness about the gender bias in textbooks that undermines girls' motivation and achievement in school. With textbooks regarded as sources for knowledge and schools as a haven for it, we call attention to dangerous gender stereotypes published in textbooks.

A UNESCO study of textbooks in different countries found myriad examples of bias in textbooks including a Turkish textbook wherein a girl is shown dreaming about being a bride while a boy dreams of becoming a doctor. In India the report indicates that only 6% of the illustrations in primary school mathematics, science and social studies textbooks showed females, while more than half showed only males. In a Tunisian textbook, students were required to complete sentences about a Mr. Thompson in the garage washing his car and Mrs. Thompson in the kitchen preparing lunch. Additionally, studies show that in Chinese social studies textbooks all scientists and soldiers were depicted as male. The global Education Monitoring Report noted that, "Not a single woman was shown as an executive, engineer, shopkeeper or merchant in six mathematics books used in Indian primary schools".

Textbooks are used by teachers as a fundamental vehicle for instruction and socialization, taking up between 70-95% of classroom time. That's, 70-95% of the time girls are in class, they are institutionally learning that they are not seen as executives, engineers, scientists, or soldiers, but they could perhaps prepare meals or gather water.

GWI also is proud of its personal connection to quality textbook writing. One of our historical figures, Professor Mary Hayden from Ireland, was a brilliant historian and writer. Her most famous work, "*A Short History of the Irish People*," a textbook published first in 1921 and widely used throughout Irish schools and universities into the 1960's.

"The brilliance of Professor Hayden has transcended through time, and the knowledge she compiled has educated students now for generations. GWI appeals to textbook authors and editors to acknowledge that a lack of representation of women and girls in textbook is not just a lack of encouragement but a presence of discouragement", says GWI President, Geeta Desai.

GWI encourages the elimination of bias in textbooks. We urge the use of more female role models in photographs and illustrations; and for more females as examples in science, math and politics. We encourage textbook authors to be more mindful of representing gender equality while authoring their textbooks. We call for increased efforts to promote gender equality in all aspects of education including restoring books as a source of fact not stereotypes.

Graduate Women International (GWI) is a membership-based international NGO based in Geneva, Switzerland, with presence in over 60 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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Contributing to this press release is GWI Intern Grace Weichler from Kent State University, United States.

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