



Graduate Women
International (GWI)

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Graduate Women International highlights underlying issues due to the lack of women in STEM fields

Geneva, Switzerland, 11 February 2020— International Day of Women and Girls in Science, introduced by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in 2015, recognises the critical role women and girls play in science and technology. With this year's theme, "Investment in Women and Girls in Science for Inclusive Green Growth", the focus is drawn to the fact that science and gender equality are both vital for the achievement of the [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#). Nevertheless, Graduate Women International (GWI) is disquieted about the low number of women working in scientific fields and the remarkable work of women in these fields lacking deserved recognition.

The World Economic Forum estimates that 65% of children entering primary school today will work in jobs that do not yet exist. However, women currently occupy less than 30% of scientific and technological research positions, and too few women are in decision-making roles and higher-paying jobs within the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). *Moreover, women gain one new STEM job for every twenty lost, whereas men gain one new STEM job for every four lost (UN Women)*. Women nowadays represent the most significant single economic force in the world (*National Geographic*). If this gender divide is not bridged the gender gap will widen, which will have extreme implications for the future of the global economy.

However, increasing the number of women in STEM fields is easier said than done: "The lack of women in STEM professions is not solved with hiring more women," states Terry Oudraad, GWI President. "The issue at stake is that there are fewer women educated in STEM than men because of underlying causes in society, and those causes must be addressed," she continues. "It is essential to get and keep girls interested in STEM as early as possible, for example by developing activities throughout the entire chain of education, from primary up to higher and vocational education, as well as training programmes for teachers and career advisers, and consultations with education managers" she adds.

Improving women's access to STEM professions is one focus area of GWI and its affiliates around the world. For instance, the GWI General Assembly adopted in 2019 [Policy Resolution 4](#) on women and STEM, which reaffirms previous resolutions and urges GWI affiliates to encourage their governments to promote STEM among women and girls. GWI is also invested in promoting STEM fields among women and girls in projects from the [Bina Roy Partner in Development Programme](#) such as the [Girls Science Clinic](#) hosted by the Ghana Association of University Women (GAUW) in 2018 or the [gender sensitisation of school laboratory technicians](#) project initiated by the Uganda Association of University Women (UAUW) in 2016.

GWI is a membership-based international non-governmental organisation 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 the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) since 1947 and maintains official relations with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) as well as the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

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Contributing to this press release is GWI intern, Anna Indermaur.

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