On International Literacy Day, GWI celebrates the power of literacy as a critical game-changer for personal development.

**What is International Literacy Day?**

The 8th September was designated International Literacy Day by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in 1966 to highlight the importance of literacy for individuals globally. The recent COVID-19 crisis and lockdowns have affected the access to literacy for the most vulnerable people in the world, especially women and girls, due to school closures. The literacy rates among women in several countries, such as in West and Central Africa, are below 50%.

**Adolescent girls and young women aged 15–24 years aged 15–24 years make up 56 per cent of the global illiterate youth population today compared to 61 per cent in 1995.**

**What is literacy?**

Literacy allows youth and adults, especially women and girls, to fully contribute to the community and acquire critical skills for their future professional and personal life.

**What happens during a literacy programme?**

A literacy programme in Uttarakhand, India increased the share of women who felt able to leave the house without permission (from 58% to 75%) and participate in village council meetings (from 19% to 41%).

**What is the 8th September?**

The 8th September was designated International Literacy Day by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in 1966 to highlight the importance of literacy for all individuals globally. The recent COVID-19 crisis and lockdowns have affected the access to literacy for the most vulnerable people in the world, especially women and girls, due to school closures. The literacy rates among women in several countries, such as in West and Central Africa, are below 50%.

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"Let us remember: One book, one pen, one child, and one teacher can change the world.

- Malala Yousafzai

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GWI and its National Federations and Associations (NFAs) firmly believe that literacy is a FUNDAMENTAL AND BASIC HUMAN RIGHT, to which all girls and women in the world must have access. In this sense, GWI and its NFAs call on governments to ensure all girls’ access to primary as well as secondary education by investing IN SCHOOLS AND TEACHERS TRAINING. LITERACY PROGRAMMES should also be implemented in areas where women lack the basic literacy skills. Institutions must draw lessons from the pandemic crisis and ADAPT THE TOOLS AND TEACHING METHODOLOGIES. Literacy is the most powerful tool to lift up poverty and is crucial to the sustainable development of all countries. IT IS TIME TO ACT!

In the last 60 years, GWI passed seven resolutions on literacy for women, which concern literacy in general, but also technology literacy and financial literacy.

- 1969: Illiteracy;
- 1971: Role of Mass media in Literacy;
- 1974 Need for Literacy Materials;
- 1983: Computer Literacy;
- 1992: Education for All and Literacy/ Literacy and Women;
- 2010: Financial Literacy

CLICK HERE to access all GWI Resolutions

GWI works to increase the number of female teachers in rural schools through its Uganda-based project Teachers for Rural Futures, which aims to train 50 young women to become teachers. By becoming teachers, the young women will be able to mentor girls and spread literacy in their communities. The project will enable around 2500 more girls to attend school over ten years.

CLICK HERE to learn more about the project and contribute to improving girls’ literacy skills

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Contribution by GWI intern, Sophie Husser
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