



Graduate Women  
International (GWI)

# Press Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact: Stacy Dry Lara, Executive Director  
[sdl@graduatewomen.org](mailto:sdl@graduatewomen.org), Tel: +41 22 731 23 80

**GWI voices alarm about the World Bank predictions for world poverty:  
88-115 million people in 2020**

Geneva, Switzerland, 17 October 2020—In 1987, over 100'000 people gathered at the Trocadéro in Paris, where the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) was signed in 1948, to proclaim that poverty is a violation of human rights and affirmed the need to come together to ensure that these rights are respected. To that effect, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly declared 17 October as the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty and urged all states to promote activities concerning eradicating poverty within their national context.

GWI notes this year's theme, *act together to achieve social and environmental justice for all*. However, GWI redirects attention to the recent World Bank (8 June 2020) predictions indicating that the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to push between 88 and 115 million people onto extreme poverty in 2020, setting back poverty reduction goals by at least three years. **Given that education and poverty are inversely related, GWI is alarmed by this new prediction.**

"The impact of poverty on a girls economic achievement is significant and begins at an early age", says GWI President, Terry Oudraad. "Young girls forced into poverty and not school face challenges with cognitive and literary ability which far too often result in lifelong poverty, which makes the work of GWI more important", she adds.

Primary education is the initial threshold that creates the pathway for girls to get out of a life of poverty. However, GWI maintains that secondary and higher education will generate girls' economic growth and development. Research shows that an additional year of schooling can raise future wages for women by up to 20 percent. According to UNESCO, some 171 million people could be lifted out of extreme poverty if every student in low-income countries finished school with basic reading skills. This is particularly important for girls.

Nowadays, with the linkages between the UN [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) targets for education and poverty give hope. SDG 1 and 2, for instance, stipulate to end poverty in all of its forms everywhere and set new benchmarks for eradicating poverty. GWI is also acutely focused on SDG 4 to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Graduate Women International is a membership-based international NGO based in Geneva, Switzerland, with a 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 Françoise Baroffio, GWI Work Study Programme Volunteer.*