The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) outline 17 goals with 169 associated targets that are the successor to the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDG). These goals include targets to end poverty, hunger, promote healthy lives, and empower women and girls. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development containing the SDGs was adopted on 25 September 2015 by the 193 countries of the United Nations (UN). This Agenda included the Means of Implementation, the Follow-up and the Review for 17 Sustainable Development Goals and their targets.

This comprehensive agenda targets all countries in the world. Sustainable development has been a major world concern since the Brundtland Commission report, Our Common Future, in 1987 first defined it as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” Financial, economic and political systems must evolve to guarantee the achievement of all 17 SDGs.

International organisations such as Graduate Women International (GWI) track the progress towards the SDGs made by all countries, especially GWI National Federation and Associations (NFAs). GWI also provides recommendation on the steps to take to further advance the situation and meet the objectives by 2030.

In 2020, the UN produced a report on the latest data available regarding the achievement of the goals. With the COVID-19 crisis hitting the world since March 2020, unprecedented health, economic, and social challenges have risen in a world that was not even close to meeting the SDGs by 2030. (1) With greater challenges come greater responsibilities and choices to make. Organisations such as GWI work actively to ensure that these choices will leave no one behind and target all those who need it, especially women and girls, and marginalised populations.

Infographics from the UN Sustainable Development Goals Report 2020 (2)

(2) Ibid
GWI takes part in the global fight towards the achievement of all 17 SDGs with its advocacy and awareness-raising work at the international and national levels through its special consultative status with the UN, as well as at the grassroot level through the work of its NFAs. In support of the effort to successfully implement the SDGs, GWI’s eighth resolution adopted during its 33rd Triennial General Assembly in 2019 focuses on the SDGs, also known as Global Goals. This resolution aims to recommend the action of its NFAs towards their respective governments and their commitment to the SDGs.

GWI suggested plan of action for its NFAs:

- NFAs should partner with other NGOs and human rights organisations to support and facilitate advocacy campaigns to support the achievement of SDGs.
- NFAs should write to their local government representatives and United Nations organisations about the need to uphold the SDGs.
- NFAs should encourage academic research and write backgronders on their local governments’ successes or failures in adopting SDGs.

Actions towards the implementation of all 17 SDGs must be accelerated and in all parts of its advocacy strategy. GWI connects the SDGs and its actions for the empowerment of women and girls, and shows that their access to lifelong education is at the core of the achievement of all 17 SDGs.

The SDGs are integral to GWI’s work. In this sense, GWI produced an infographic showing the link between the SDGs and all resolutions taken by GWI throughout the years. This production can be viewed on the last page of this paper. Along with these resolutions, GWI’s campaigns and projects are impregnated with the SDGs, as all issues covered by GWI relate to the goals. References to the SDGs can be found in each infographic, press release, toolkit or written statement to the Human Rights Council (HRC) produced by GWI.

“Research shows that including women in projects like solar energy, reforestation and sustainable waste management, not only results in favourable climate impact but also brings us closer to achieving gender equality called for in SDG 5.9”

FROM KNOWLEDGE TO ACTION: INSTITUTES OF HIGHER EDUCATION AS KEY DRIVERS TOWARDS THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Title of GWI’s written statement to the HRC40 in 2019, specifically focusing on the SDGs.
In line with its Resolution, GWI recommends that states:

- Increase their Official Development Assistance (ODA) to 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI) as adopted by a resolution of the UN General Assembly in 1970.

- Ensure that any country/state receiving aid:
  - Is involved in the planning and delivery of identified aid.
  - Is accountable for their adherence to the implementation of the SDG’s.
  - Guarantees that women have leadership roles within the process.

- Implement achievable, realistic plans of action, that have been developed in conjunction with local jurisdictions, Indigenous nations and civil society, that are published and promoted; and

- Develop mechanisms to ensure accountability for money spent and progress achieved, both nationally and internationally.

GWI also recommends that states:

- Invest in data and statistics in order to maintain coverage of all population groups and produce comparable data to advance the 2030 Agenda;

- Put women and girls, as well as marginalised populations, at the centre of the decision-making process regarding development. Inclusiveness is key to sustainability.

GWI advises civil society individuals and organisations to:

- Reach out to governments and advocate for the implementation of the SDGs, make recommendations and provide data to held global leaders accountable on commitments made.

- Implement development programmes oriented at the SDGs.

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.

www.graduatewomen.org

GWI operates with a small yet dedicated staff consisting of an Executive Director, a Programme Officer, and a host of committed interns. Further, our work is possible only with the support of our tireless Board of Directors.

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