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Graduate Women International (GWI) respectfully submits the following recommendations for inclusion in the CSW66 Zero Draft. After weeks of collaborative research and outreach by GWI Zero Draft Task Force comprised of GWI members from around the globe, we have identified these as **critical concerns regarding the inclusion of education** in “the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes”. (CSW66 Priority Theme). Our work is well-cited for convenience.

GWI is in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council since 1947 and maintains official relations with the UNESCO and the ILO. GWI is a membership-based international NGO headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, with presence in over 60 countries. Founded in 1919, GWI advocates for women and girls’ right to equality and empowerment through the safe access to quality education and training up to the highest levels.

We hope that identifying these globally representative issues will assist you as you create the Zero Draft for CSW66 which will be addressing the most significant challenges in education faced today.

**Commission on the Status of Women 66th Session (CSW66)
Zero Draft Recommendations
Education**

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Climate change is not gender neutral. It acts as a risk multiplier for women in climate-affected areas who are disproportionately impacted by climate change. At the same time, women are uniquely positioned to contribute to meaningful climate action. From the grassroots to the institutional level, women bring valuable insight and leadership urgently needed to build climate-resilient communities, lower carbon emissions, and initiate the necessary adaptations to combat the negative effects of climate change.

Climate Action is more than just States’ responsibility: it is a global compact that must meaningfully include women who comprise half the world’s population without which inclusion, the world stands to lose its most valuable resources in the completion of all SDGs and falling short of the 2030 Agenda. ¹

¹ GWI Written Statement to CSW 66



1. **Legal:** Significant standard-setting instruments - conventions, declarations, recommendations, and charters – provide a normative framework for the right to education. They are of great importance because they give Member States a means of translating the right to an education into concrete national-level action that can then be monitored for implementation. Some of these instruments have legally binding force, mainly conventions and treaties. UNESCO’s Convention Against Discrimination in Education (1962) has been ratified by 102 States and has binding force in international law. Other instruments include, but are not limited to, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979), and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (1966). Article 13 of this latter document is the most comprehensive on the right to education.

2. **Policy-making:** *Incentivize Member States to include women in all programs and policy development.*
 - a. Education for girls and women is the most important **policy initiative** that can be made in the face of climate change. Education brings empowerment. Girls and women learn their rights, develop skills needed in the new economy, understand how to use social media and advocacy to advance their cause, and develop the knowledge and confidence to demand to ‘*a seat at the table*’ where climate change policy- and decision-making takes place. When women obtain political empowerment, their presence is strongly linked to better environmental outcomes, including but not limited to the creation of more protected land areas, ratification of environmental treaties, stricter climate change policies, and smaller environmental footprints.

 - b. To date the perspectives of women in policy and decision-making at the local, national and international levels as been largely ignored while the need has been repeatedly emphasized. Educated women can harness their core academic competencies, expertise, critical problem-solving and decision-making skills to climate change mitigation policies and programmes leading to lower carbon footprints. There is an intrinsic link between women’s education and political participation: The higher the level of women's formal education, the more the more women participate in policy development. A greater number of women in parliament results in higher ratification of environmental treaties².

² UNFCCC, Differentiated impacts of climate change on women and men; the integration of gender considerations in climate policies, plans and actions; and progress in enhancing gender balance in national climate delegations, 2019,

https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/sbi2019_inf8.pdf ⁴

Ibid



- c. **Education and Curricula:** *Fund and prioritize women's and girls' access to education and retention up to the highest levels of learning, so that they may be empowered to speak climate truth and justice to power.* Years of progress and effort towards gender equality in education must not be reversed but reinforced with the provision of inclusive and equal systems of education together with tools that will facilitate girls' and women's skills and power to act against climate change. The Malala Fund estimates that in 2021 climate-related events will prevent at least four million girls in low- and lower-middle-income countries from completing their education. If current trends continue, by 2025 climate change will be a factor in preventing at least 12.5 million girls from completing their education each year! (Girls' Education Challenges Index GECI & ND-GAIN Index).
- a. **Make climate change a core curriculum subject;** one that is taught in students' primary language and in terms of the impact on their local community and nation. This curriculum must include the changes needed in terms of school infrastructure, how to prepare for natural disasters including migration and displacement, how to provide education, both low- and high-tech, if access to school buildings is not available, and what regulations and penalties must be implemented to successfully meet the challenge of climate change.
- b. **Quality Climate Change Education (CCE):** Call for CCE that is gender-empowering and gender responsive, intersectorial, and transdisciplinary, based in science, fosters civic engagement and climate action, and builds pathways to future careers in the green economy.
- i. CCE to ensure and prepare for the needs of the present and future workforce (green economy). ³ CCE to include teaching how different groups, like women and girls, are differentially impacted by climate change. Engage with teachers, education unions, farmers, and other sectors (key stakeholder groups) to address and deliver quality CCE.
- ii. **Financing:** Call for financing of public education to support the delivery of quality CCE. Ensure that teachers receive adequate training and continuing professional development to deliver quality CCE, and that developing countries receive international support in the development and implementation of quality CCE with wealthy industrial nations taking a leading role in providing funding (Climate Justice).

³ (Source: Benchmarks for Education International (EI) Climate Change Education as reported by Christina Kwauk and published by Education International, November 2021).



- iii. **Crisis education response**: Strengthen education systems to support the delivery of CCE and to continue learning initiatives without interruption in times of crises. Strengthening education systems calls for funding and resources to redesign education systems to continue forward during emergencies. Call for international cooperation to support education and training opportunities and more funding to revamp education systems to deal with crisis and emergency response with limited interruption in girls education. Engaging families and communities to prevent interruptions, develop education infrastructure to withstand extreme weather events and other crises including the ability of school leaders, administrators and leaders to deliver quality educational programs in times of crises, and to enable learners to continue their studies without interruption. To keep girls at the center of the redesigned education systems (crucial). Engage the families of girls in times of crises and emergencies. Develop education emergency systems.

- c. **Gender-Equal Green Learning Agenda** (Malala Fund Report) is a new framework to help leaders simultaneously address girls' education and the climate change crises. The framework consists of four pillars: 1) Access: Getting all girls in school and learning for 12 years; 2) Skills: Teaching girls an expanded vision of green skills; 3) Values: Promoting sustainable values through climate education; and 4) Activism: Empowering students to take action on climate justice. It is estimated that if even 16% of high school students in middle- and high-income countries receive climate change education, carbon dioxide emissions would be reduced by 19 gigatons by the year 2050.

- d. **Investment in girls' STEM education** can encourage girls and women to participate in and lead innovations in climate-resilient and green technologies, bringing a gendered perspective that supports more effective and inclusive solutions. Promote equal rights and opportunity for all genders through every aspect of education, including curriculum content and learning materials, learning environments, teacher practice and school management. Girls increased participation in STEM classes ensures there will be a large, skilled workforce to support a successful transition to a low-carbon economy. UNICEF and ITU in The Joint Report (2020) remind us again of the global gender divide not just in STEM but also in access and use of the internet, in digital skills and digital tools, and in tech sector leadership and entrepreneurship. Women need to be Leading Innovation at the highest levels.

- e. **Ensure that NDCs (Nationally Determined Contribution) commit to a twin-track approach** to making education systems gender-equal and resilient so that



girls do not drop out of or miss school due to climate-related events, like planning for emergency education provisions in ways that do not disadvantage girls.

3. **Economies:** Climate change will severely impact already struggling economies. When disaster strikes, too many girls will leave school and enter early marriages. Such marriages, by force or by choice, i.e., to provide their families with desperately needed income, will only lead to further generations of poverty and deprive countries of the additional human capital needed to adapt to and mitigate climate change. We already know that by keeping a girl in school even one more year adds 20% to her income as an adult. In addition, women with a secondary education can expect to make almost twice as much as those with no education. Africa could add \$316,000,000,000 or 10% of GDP from 2020-2025 if each Member State made advances in gender equality to match the Member State in their region that has achieved the most progress in parity.
4. **Data Collection:** To better determine how climate change is affecting learning, Member States must collect disaggregated data by State, gender, age, income, geographic location, and racial and ethnic identity. The information gathered can then be used to help States plan for the resources needed in the face of climate change while addressing any inequities inherent in their educational institutions.
5. **Human Rights:** *Member states are asked to fulfil their obligation related to the protection of the rights guaranteed under the Convention on the Discrimination against Women, in particular General Recommendation No. 37 on Gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change¹.* This year UNICEF produced the Children's Climate Risk Index (CCRI), declaring that "... *the climate crisis is a child rights' crisis.*" This is particularly bad news for girls, as they, along with women, die at 14 times the rate of males during natural disasters. UNICEF calculated the threat to children in 163 countries based on the effects of (1) *environmental threats and stresses* due to water scarcity, riverine and/or coastal flooding, cyclones, vector-borne diseases, heatwaves, drought, and air, soil, and water pollution and (2) *child vulnerability* due to inadequate health and nutrition, education, water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), and social protection. Globally, nearly half of the world's children, 1,000,000,000 in all, live in the identified extremely high-risk countries. If used, CCRI provides countries with a blueprint to address their nation's environmental threats and decrease child vulnerability.
6. **Rural Women and Girls:** *Include all women and their innate expertise, academic learning, analytical and critical skills to build much need capacities into the accomplishment of SDG 13 as also a means to achieve SDG 4. Support and encourage traditionally excluded populations of women and girls to share their success at climate adaptation and then replicate these models* We cannot talk about climate change without addressing the plight of rural girls and women. UNESCO (1995) stated, "women and girls are the largest single category of persons



denied equality of education today. And this is particularly true in developing countries where women are a major part of agricultural workforce.” In such countries women make up 43% of agricultural workers, and up to 60% in Africa and Asia, where they farm the land and tend the forests, fisheries, and ecosystems. Yet they hold only 20% of the world’s land. If women had the same access to production resources as men, they would increase the crop output by 20 to 30% and reduce hunger by 12 to 17 %. (UN WCMC, 2000). Tapping into women’s knowledge of the land, especially indigenous women, can provide governments, civil society, and educational institutions with the means to mitigate droughts, poor crop yields, and starvation.

7. **Legal Barriers:** The elimination of legal barriers to women’s land ownership, resources, and inheritance is imperative. Removing such barriers increases education opportunities, improves livelihoods, reduces the health impacts of climate change on girls and women of all ages who suffer most from food and water insecurity and malnutrition that accompany legal barriers faced.

8. **Water:** Climate change is already affecting water access for people around the world, causing more severe droughts and floods. Increasing global temperatures are one of the main contributors to this problem. Climate change impacts the water cycle by influencing when, where, and how much precipitation falls.⁴ Of even more concern, as the planet heats up, clean water will become an even scarcer resource. Investments to improve access to resilient water, sanitation, and hygiene services can considerably reduce overall climate risk for 415,000,000 children as well as decrease over one million deaths related to unclean births, infections, and maternal mortality, while helping to prevent hookworm infections.
 - a. **Women and Water Management:** UN Water (2021) points out that women and girls continue to carry the burden of water supply, sanitation, and health for the household. Yet fewer than 50 countries have laws that speak to the role of women and girls’ involvement in rural sanitation and water management. *“Why Water is a Women’s Issue”* (Concern Worldwide; 2021) elaborated on the continued perils of carrying water, which can take up to 3½ hours each day. It is physically demanding, especially for girls and pregnant women, poses risks of physical and sexual assaults, and keeps girls from school and women from completing other necessary tasks. Through education girls and women can gain the information and skills needed to address water mismanagement and pollution while demanding easier and more equitable access for their families and communities.

 - b. **Water / Migration linked to Human Trafficking:** Recent studies have linked the water crisis and climate change to human trafficking (either sexual exploitation or forced labor) as a result of ‘climate migration’ with predictions of as many as

⁴ [How Climate Change Impacts Water Access | National Geographic Society](#)



1.4 billion people, 1/8 of the world's population forced to migrate more than 620 miles from their current homes by the end of the century.⁵ Many, desperate for security and work, become victims of human trafficking especially women and girls when their lives are disrupted and their access to education including lifelong learning experiences is lost. Mitigating human trafficking can be achieved through access to clean water and adequate food, essential in keeping populations in place and girls in school. Local adaptations to housing that reduce the effects of climate change (such as flooding) and decreasing greenhouse gas emissions along with increasing government resources and strengthening enforcement against traffickers can mitigate these impacts.

9. Women Leading Through Technology Innovation

Women's active role as technology drivers is essential to accelerate development of technological advances in climate impact areas such as health, air and water pollution, food production, soil conservation, reforestation, carbon sequestration, and renewable energy. Yet women continue to be marginalized, and men are overrepresented on all constituted bodies on climate process with only 33 % women government delegates. Shockingly in the ICT arena women make up only 17 % of students, 19 % of managers and 9 % of developers

Women are powerful change agents bring specific knowledge, skills, and perspectives to effectively contribute to climate change adaptation and mitigation. This may be actualized by women innovating technological advances and solutions, both of which critically require equitable access to participation and decision making at all levels capital financing.

10. Financing and Funding

a. Gender Equity Financing

Climate change financing has largely ignored gender in their funding allocations and decision making, ultimately failing to incorporate gender dimension into their policies, programs, and projects. Climate financing can either alleviate or exacerbate gender equity and poverty, when in fact such mechanisms are catalytic to climate action and should enable, not hinder women.

Financing mechanisms can greatly sensitize mindsets to improve gender equitable deployment of funds by assessing projects through a gendered lens in their investment portfolios and women led projects. Fiscal policies responsive to women's need and gender equality objectives contribute to better economic outcomes and social benefits as stated by IMF 2016

b. Financial support for mitigations and adaptation to climate change for girls and women of all ages through **dedicated funds, debt cancellation, grants instead of**

⁵ ["Climate Change and Human Trafficking After the Paris Agreement" by Michael B. Gerrard \(miami.edu\)](#)



loans, and reparations that benefits local ecosystems, rural women and girls, **Indigenous knowledge** and youth leadership is imperative.

11. Climate – Collaboration and Inclusion of All Sectors.

Industry in both private and public sector equally, are the key drivers in carbon emissions and the air, water, and land pollution. Conversely both private and public sectors have the largest role in driving causation and for impact for ameliorating the effects of climate change through positive technology changes and renewable energy as well as policy and legislation. Both sectors in collaboration with civil society and academia need to aggregate efforts to educate companies, communities, and individuals to change mindsets and awareness for climate sensitive perspectives and policies for in all sectors for maximum impact and intersectionality.

- 12. Women’s Health:** 80% people displaced by climate change are women and are 14 times more likely to suffer health consequences and die during disasters like Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans, and the Tsunami in Haiti. Climate change, pollution, destruction of environment equally impacts both hemispheres with a reverberating intertwined negative effect on women. Climate change is the single biggest, alarming health threat facing humanity, already harming women’s health disproportionality through air pollution, poor water quality, rampant disease, extreme weather events, forced displacement, food insecurity and pressures on mental health. Combined with the multiple impacts of social determinants, we are witnessing an exacerbated deterioration of women’s health, compounded by the lack of good healthcare in US and globally.⁶

The lack of gender-disaggregated health data, disguises the needs of different life stage of women; perpetuates lack of awareness and impedes desperately needed education, awareness, and action at all levels of decision making for governments and global healthcare agencies both at global and regional level.

In summary, the gap between the existence of rights and their effective enjoyment derives from a lack of commitment by Governments to promoting and protecting those rights and the failure of Governments to inform women and men alike about them. The lack of appropriate recourse mechanisms at the national and international levels, and inadequate resources at both levels, compound the problem. The time has come for all sectors of society – governmental, civil society, business, individuals – to take the steps needed to save humanity from itself.

Respectfully,

Graduate Women International

⁶ Women Graduates – USA, Inc. written statement to CSW 66