

GWI United Nation Representative Advocacy Report 2022

GWI advocacy goals

1. 100% of United Nations Member States commit to policy, legislation, budget and infrastructure to facilitate transition of girls from primary to secondary school and ensure gender parity and gender equality throughout secondary education by 2030.
2. By 2030 100% of United Nations low-income Member States have increased access to tertiary education for girls and women by 50%.
3. 100% of United Nations Member States commit to and implement policies for continuing education to empower women throughout the life course, within the formal and informal economies.
4. Influence the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4.
5. All 17 SDGs will include girls' education targets.

Please bear in mind these five overarching, long-term goals during any United Nations intervention that you make on behalf of GWI. Any intervention should push these five goals further.

NB: *Although these goals represent GWI's mission, our United Nations Representatives are should always promote all GWI key messages and represent GWI professionally.*

Securing Quality Education, 21st Century Skills, and the Successful Transition from School to Work in a Digital World – 3/25/22

This side event, sponsored by Generation Equality Forum and facilitated by a UNICEF staff person, included representatives from the UN, UNICEF, government, labor, and private industry. Below are some highlights.

Education International (Ms. Holst; Deputy Secretary-General)

Education International is a union that represents 32 million educators, mainly women. Ms. Holst emphasized the need for high quality, universal education, but also education that is public and free. It is only when these variables are present that true equality will be realized for all. She further stated that, in her view, growing commercialization and privatization of education is the greatest threat to securing SDGs 4 and 5.

Ms. Holst reported on a survey conducted in 2020-21 on 35 high- and middle-income countries' Monitoring Reports. The survey indicated that support for the public provision of education is strong. Despite this, however, the role of non-state actors is on the rise and budgets for education have been shrinking. To fulfill the right to a quality education there is a need for:

- Substantial public investment in education and teachers that includes, but is not limited to, timely, free, quality teacher training and professional development
- A fair and adequate taxation policy that addresses the deeply unequal, institutional structures that allow women and girls to bear the brunt of climate change and face exclusion in the job market (only 25% of global tech jobs are filled by women)
- Equitable internet access for all children with protection from cyber bullying and online violence
- Preparation for work in a green economy and the digital marketplace

Finally, she cautioned that there are no quick solutions; real change takes time.

ProFuturo (Ms. Brier; Managing Director)

ProFuturo is a Spanish tech company that primarily serves countries in the global south as well parts of Asia. As we have all seen, technology can bring advances in equality but it can also widen the digital divide. Among the issues/concerns she addressed were:

- When schools close, a lot more than education is lost. During the pandemic 370 million children missed school lunches, 10 million girls were at risk of early marriage, and 9 million children were at risk for child labor.
- In 2019, the World Bank coined the phrase *Learning Poverty* to describe the 53% of 10-year-old students in low- and middle-income countries unable to read and comprehend a short text appropriate for their age. Even worse, UNESCO estimates that this could go as high as 70% due to the pandemic. This finding suggests that it is not enough for students to be enrolled in school; they also need effective teaching if they are to achieve at a level comparable to students in high-income nations.

Rwanda's Directorate of Gender Promotion and Women's Improvement (Mr. Nyirasafari; Minister)

Equality of men and women is written into the Constitution (Item 10; Section 4). In addition, education is considered a human right. As a result, the country provides a free, 12-year basic education to all. Currently, gender equality is at parity (49%) at the primary level while girls make up 53.3% of all lower secondary students and 55.5% of students at the upper secondary level.

Rwanda has one of the fastest growing tech sectors in Africa. They have achieved this through several initiatives. The *Rwanda Coding Academy* was started to bridge gender equality in tech. Likewise, the *One Laptop Per Child* program was established to give each child broadband access. Nevertheless, challenges remain, especially cultural barriers that include the belief that STEM is meant for males.

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (Ms. Queisser/Senior Counselor)

This organization looked at what teen and parent expectations are regarding careers.

Among the findings are that:

1. Parents hold different expectations based on gender i.e., more boys are expected to go into STEM fields.
2. In most countries, teens responded when asked, "What job do you aspire to by age 30?" with mostly 20th Century jobs – doctors, teachers, business managers,

police officers, politicians, veterinarians. The exception was in countries that have a strong vocational/training/apprenticeship orientation such as Germany and Switzerland. Students in these latter countries had an awareness of a wider range of career opportunities as well as knowledge regarding the role technology is going to play in the future world of work.

3. Even when girls performed well in math and science, they lacked confidence in their skills and said they did not expect to work in those fields.

4. Many young people don't understand what educational qualifications will be needed for specific jobs.

OECD recommended the following:

1. Create more internship opportunities for young people.

2. Encourage teens to experience workplaces firsthand through volunteer or part-time work.

3. Have young people spend more time thinking about and exploring future career possibilities.

Global Fund for Women (Kenya)

AkiraChix – She Builds – She Serves – She Leads

This organization was started by Kenyan female engineers 10 years ago. Starting out with just a bus they traveled around introducing girls to coding and graphic arts. They now run a 9-month education program. A very inspiring video worth viewing.

Lifeline Ventures (Ms. Ismail/Entrepreneur in Residence)

This company was interested in answering two questions: How do we support women creating their own businesses? How do we help women transition into existing businesses?

A survey completed in 2019 indicated that 93% of all venture capital investment in the Nordics (\$3.2 Billion Euros) went to all male companies. Only 1% went to all female companies and 6% to mixed male-female companies. Recommendations included:

- Take an action-oriented approach to supporting and recruiting females
- Be aware of who you give your platform to
- Diversify leadership at the top in both public and private spheres

International Labor Organization (Ms. Gupta/Chief of Employment & Labor Policies)

Ms. Gupta suggested that the key question for policy makers is how to promote a smooth transition of young women from education to the labor market. She warned that if this effort is not scaled up the SDGs are at risk. Ms. Gupta called for a human-centered recovery with the ILO playing a significant role. Recommendations included:

- Create jobs in the caring economy sector
- Create nontraditional, green jobs
- Provide childcare so women can work
- Establish equal pay for women
- Prevent violence in the workplace

Sweden (Ms. Grandin; Minister of Foreign Affairs)

Sweden has had free, universal education for all since 1842. While social norms and stereotypes are still an issue, in the last few years there has been growing concern regarding

boys' performance. They are not getting into or choosing to go into higher education at the same rate as girls. She called for a focus on vocational training for adults, a change in mindset such that those entering the workforce expect that they may shift jobs and have multiple careers, and support for girls' and women's entry into green, renewable jobs in agriculture and ecotourism.

UN Affairs at Microsoft (Ms. Cossette)

Ms. Cossette stated that there is a role for technology in achieving SDG5. During the last six months she has been working on a pilot project which looks at how to scale efforts to address digital inclusion that includes connectivity, affordability, and digital literacy. She described projects in several countries, including Ghana, Kenya, India, Colombia, and Guatemala, that involve deploying connectivity in community centers operated by women and consisting of a microfinance center, education, and health. She stated that success will need a lot of buy in, a lot of money, and a recognition that one size does not fit all.

UNICEF (Ms. Alleman; Specialist in Gender Events and Design/Global Innovation Office)

An effort is underway to engage multiple stakeholders in funding the most promising business, as well as public, models through a gender literacy equity fund. To date UNICEF, Volta Capital, and Finland have joined UNICEF. If this is to succeed there must be collective funding and shared outcomes.

Submitted by:

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