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On World Youth Skills Day, Graduate Women International urges states to invest in quality education and training for young women and girls

Geneva, Switzerland, 15 July 2022 – In 2014, the United Nations General Assembly declared 15 July as World Youth Skills Day, to celebrate the importance of equipping young people with skills such as technical and vocational education and training (TVET) for employment, decent work and entrepreneurship. Sadly, prior to the pandemic, one in three young women aged 15-24 were not in employment, education or training (NEET) (ILO) and all estimates indicate these numbers are worse today. Graduate Women International (GWI) observes this year's theme, *transforming youth skills for the future*, by raising awareness and taking action to reduce these deplorable statistics and enhance young women's and girls' skills.

Globally, young people make up 18% of the population but 40% of the unemployed (UNESCO). On top of these numbers, in low income countries, only 85 young women are literate per 100 literate young men (UNESCO), with a total number of 114 million youth who are illiterate worldwide (UNESCO).

“Education is the most impactful strategy for change. Educating young women and girls significantly increases their access to formal jobs in the long term”, says Terry Oudraad, GWI President. “When girls go to school, they grow into women who have more control over their lives and who have an increased sense of self-worth”, she adds.

Currently 43.2% of the world's working-age women are employed, compared to 68.6% of working-age men (ILO). Action is clearly needed. GWI is committed to empowering young women and girls through the acquisition of new skills, with programmes such as Bina Roy Partners in Development (BRPID), Teachers for Rural Futures (TFRF), Hegg Hoffet Fund for Displaced Women Graduates and the GWI internship programme. In the past 100 years, GWI has successfully trained thousands of young women for the job market who have gone on to find meaningful and secure employment.

“Being an intern with GWI for six months, helped me learn the skills needed to ready myself for a career in an international NGO”, says Alexa Grace, GWI Programme and Projects Officer. “After my internship I landed employment, advocating for women's and girl's equal access to education”, she adds.

GWI calls on states to implement programmes that empower young women and girls through providing them with the skills needed for a career, in order to eliminate the gender employment gap.

About Graduate Women International (GWI)

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 and is an NGO maintaining official relations with UNESCO and ILO.

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