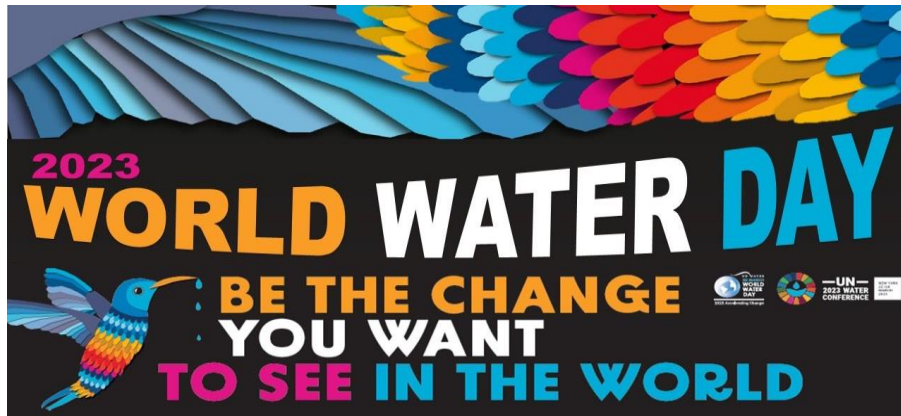




Graduate Women International

Empowering women & girls through lifelong education

GWI UPDATE – 29 March 2023



— Graduate Women International (GWI) News —

GWI marks World Water Day with impactful infographic

World Water Day is a United Nations Day of Observation celebrated annually on 22 March. The day highlights the importance of access to fresh water and aims to accelerate change to address the water and sanitation crisis and promote sustainable management of freshwater resources. While the Day has come and gone this year, raising awareness about the right to access fresh water and sanitation remains constant. **To learn more about the World Water Day and impactful ideas for action, GWI invites you to download infographic produced for the occasion [HERE](#).** To further mark the Day, GWI participated in the 52nd session of the Human Rights Council (HRC52) 24 March session where it was proposed that 2024 be recognized as the World Year of Water in order to mobilise as much as possible the different communities, local actors and governments on this crucial issue.

GWI participates on the 67th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW67)

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women around the world. Each year for CSW, representatives of Member States, United Nations (UN) entities, and ECOSOC-accredited non-governmental organisations (NGOs), including representatives from GWI, gather in New York at the UN headquarters and surrounding venues to evaluate progress and make steps towards gender equality and policies required to advance women worldwide. The CSW67 concluded 17 March after two weeks of side and parallel events, discussion, debate, and deliberation on this year's priority theme: "Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls".

Over the course of this year's CSW, GWI hosted, co-hosted, and participated in a range of impactful CSW67 sessions. This has included coverage of key events, such as the CSW67 Forum Consultation Day, the UN Women Opening Session, and International Women's Day celebrations. Additionally, GWI hosted two Breakfast Briefings and an International Women's Day social dinner alongside two well-attended virtual parallel events. Some 60 GWI members attended CSW67 in person, with countless others participating virtually from around the world.

GWI CSW67 parallel events summary and video access

GWI was delighted to host two parallel events during CSW67. **The first, “Innovative Ideas in Education and Advocacy to Empower Women and Girls,” held on 14 March.** Participants heard from four GWI members working innovatively in various fields. Shaila Rao Mistry (U.S.A.), GWI Vice President Advocacy, began by presenting innovative solutions through technology and digital education. Meera Bondre (India), GWI Vice President Membership, continued with a presentation on the education and empowerment of women through the teaching of art, music, and dance. She explained that, in addition to being positive for women’s ability to concentrate and to trust themselves, learning these disciplines makes it possible, among other things, to discover new skills, meet and are vectors of employment and entrepreneurship for women. Lucia Guzman (Mexico), GWI Education Committee Convenor, then gave a presentation on drama teaching for women and girls with details on how learning about literature and music empowers them. Finally, Confidence Dikgole (South Africa), member of the GWI Education Committee, presented experiences of innovation in policy regarding online education, with many proposals for improving and modernising education in South Africa. This parallel event was moderated by Shirley Gillett, GWI Vice President of Education and Stacy Dry Lara, GWI Executive Director. **GWI thanks the organisers, speakers and participants of this event. GWI invites you to view and share the event recording [HERE](#).**

The second CSW67 parallel event, “Gender Equality in Digital Education: Young Women and Financial Challenges”, was held on 16 March. This side event was developed by Sudha Srivastava, GWI Treasurer, President of the Young Member Network (YMN), and international speaker on issues impacting women and girls; and Stacy Dry Lara, GWI Executive Director, with contributions and breakout leadership from several GWI YMN members. This interactive event explored gender disparities access to financial technology and advances in education with examples from rural and urban areas.

Speakers Srivastava, and GWI Young Members, Tzazil Valencia (Mexico), Radwa Mohamed (Egypt) and Agnes Adom-Konadu (Ghana) presented financial challenges for young women in today’s digital world in their countries. These include, for example, the lack of access to basic digital services, cultural norms and the low participation rate of women in STEM. As Valencia pointed out, these disparities are exacerbated in some communities: women living in rural areas, with low incomes, or members of indigenous communities. In the MENA Region, presented by Mohamed, other barriers appear, such as conflicts, the low economy of a country and the lack of priority given to education by government, which are like those in Ghana, presented by Adom-Konadu despite recent, positive initiatives by the post-pandemic government. It is essential to identify root causes and solutions for accessing financial barriers and technical challenges as did brilliantly the four speakers.

These presentations were followed by breakout sessions with GWI YMN members Eveline van Eerd (Netherlands), Ogechi Adiuku (Nigeria), Perine Wagdi (Egypt) and Cynthia Adinortey (Ghana) as breakout leaders. Women from Canada, Türkiye, Nigeria, India, Ghana, Switzerland, United States, Egypt and more contributed to the discussion. Adinortey’s breakout room recognized both strengths and weaknesses of Ghana’s current educational system. A strength is the free 12-year pre-tertiary education, which provides boys and girls with an equal opportunity to receive education. This breakout group came up with suggestions to address current weaknesses, which include increasing the number of female role models for young girls, computer training sessions to boost digital literacy amongst young girls, adequately trained teachers, and more support from telecommunication companies through extending connectivity in rural areas. Wagdi’s group discussed solutions for filling the digital education gender gap in MENA region. They explored various solutions, including using social media to create awareness campaigns to reach wide audiences - with a specific focus on rural areas. They also discussed having more role models for young girls, camps to boost digital skills for young girls, and the creation of programs that have a special gender-sensitive curricula. Adiuku led a

group that discussed the question: What can we do so that more women and young girls have access to financial literacy and savings? Her group had participants from Spain, Nigeria, Mexico, Ghana, Canada, and India. Solutions included adding financial literacy courses to academic curricula early as possible; this will include lifelong learning course for over school-age women, and finally reorienting the global mindset that prevails within institutions and bodies of power that perpetuate harmful cultural norms that restrict women from learning and practice basic skills pertaining to money management, saving, and wealth creation. To summarize, all breakout groups had overlapping ideas for how to best approach digital literacy and digital education challenges which highlights the global nature of these challenges. **GWl thanks the organisers, speakers, and participants of this event. GWl invites you to view and share the event recording [HERE](#).**

— GWl Member News —

CFUW and TAUW hold introduction to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) webinar

GWl congratulates TAUW (Turkish Association of University Women) and CFUW (Canadian Federation of University Women) for the organisation of the webinar entitled **“Introduction to the UN SDGs: A Blueprint to Achieve a Better and More Sustainable Future for All” held on 24 March**. During this webinar, listeners gained in-depth understanding of the 17 SDGs and how they can be utilized to create a more sustainable and equal world. Meral Guler, TAUW President, discussed how TAUW’s overall goal is positively impact education for young women. She highlighted how 400 students who are victims of a recent earthquake received a scholarship from TAUW. TAUW also has been working to create a safe space for women to stay with their children and find them job opportunities after the disaster is calmed. Dr. Başak Ovacık, lecturer in gender studies at Bahcesehir University and GWl Immediate Past Vice-President Fundraising (2019-2022) gave a blueprint on how societies can achieve better access to clean water, less poverty, increased education, economic partnerships. She then transitioned into explaining the 17 SDGs one by one. She highlighted that only seven years remain to achieve the SDGs by 2030, and that the UN believes that they can get it done. Dr. Ovacik emphasised the need for the world to learn the SDGs and teach the SDGs to everyone. Overall, Guler and Dr. Ovacik emphasised the importance of the UN SDGs and how they are applicable to every aspect of our lives. Through spreading awareness of the SDGs, we are then able to act upon them and create a substantial difference both on an individual level and a global level. **To view this event, gain a deeper insight into how the SDGs permeate every aspect of life and have the potential to create a more equitable and sustainable society, click [HERE](#).**

Spanish Speaking Cultural Bridge Project holds 11th event

As part of the Women's History Month celebrations, the GWl Membership Marketplace Spanish Speaking Cultural Bridge Project held its 11th event, **“Women Writing about Women”**. Hosted by the Asociacion de Mujeres Universitarias de Marbella (AMUM), guest panellists from Argentina, Bolivia and México, Lic. Ana María Ardenghi; Lic. Mirtha Marlene Durán Zuleta and Mtr. Beatriz Saavedra respectively spoke about different female writers from their countries. They talked about the motivation that has driven them to write about women and the creative process that accompanies this activity. The last speaker ended with a wonderful quote from Gabriela Mistral (Chile, 1889-1957), *“Where there is a tree to plant, you plant it. Where there is a mistake to be corrected, you correct it. Where there is an effort that everyone else shirks, you do it. Be the one who moves the stone out of the way”*. The Q&A session afterwards was rich and vivid. **GWl thanks AMUM for organising this next session of the Spanish Culture Bridge Project and looks forward to the session 12.**

Canada ratifies International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention on elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work

On 30 January 2023, Canada became the 25th country in the world and the 8th country in the Americas to ratify Convention 190, the first international labour standard to address violence and harassment in the workplace. This Convention affirms that everyone has the right to work free from violence and harassment, and also provides for the first internationally agreed definition of violence and harassment in the world of work, including of gender-based violence (GBV); and protects everyone in the world of work, including interns or apprentices, and covers the public and private sectors, the formal and informal economies, as well as urban and rural areas. The Convention also requires ratifying Member States to adopt an inclusive, integrated and gender-responsive approach to preventing and eliminating violence and harassment, through prevention, protection and enforcement measures and remedies, as well as guidance, training, and awareness-raising. Although data is difficult to quantify because many keep silent for fear of reprisals or losing their jobs, a 2017-2019 study by the ILO found that 52% of women and 27% of men experienced sexual harassment in the workplace; 72% of female victims confided in a loved one, and only 4% filed a complaint. Harassment and GBV at work continue to be a barrier to women's emancipation and empowerment, including in developed countries. As an NGO working for access to education and the elimination of GBV, GWI welcomes this news, each ratification being a significant step towards the elimination of these unacceptable practices and the establishment of a healthy workspace, safe and accessible for all. CFUW is *"pleased with this very positive development"*, which they will be *"monitoring over the coming months and years"*, says Barbara DuMoulin, CFUW Vice President International Relations. As a reminder, last year the CFUW adopted a resolution on harassment of politicians (being the most visible victims) which they presented to the GWI Triennial Assembly: you can access to the resolution [HERE](#).

— GWI at the United Nations —

GWI facilitates HRC52 civil society speakers

GWI, as President of the NGO Committee of Human Rights, was pleased to facilitate four civil society speakers, with varied backgrounds, to address the General Segment of the High-Level Segment at HRC52 on 3 March at the UN in Geneva. GWI congratulates the speakers for their diverse and impactful interventions. A summary of each intervention is below. The video statements can be accessed [HERE](#) at time stamp 22:47.

The Need for and Importance of Digital Education

Patrice Wellesley-Cole, GWI President, emphasises to the HRC52 crucial the consideration of digital education in regards to achieving inclusive and accessible education for all. Access to digital tools to enhance one's learning and ability to consume knowledge is becoming a requirement within a classroom setting. COVID-19 exacerbated the digital technology crisis amongst children, as many were unable to interact and learn effectively through the digital tools available to them. Overall, GWI calls on the Human Rights Council to acknowledge and act upon the need for improved digital access along with better "infrastructure and integral structural maintenance". **You missed Patrice Wellesley-Cole intervention? GWI invites you to see the video intervention** [HERE](#).

The Separation between the Health and Social Development of People from Geo-Political Sanctions

Rory Trull, the IFSW (International Federation of Social Workers) Secretary-General spoke about the necessity of "developing new global practices relating to international sanctions". He mentions the consequences that are a result of a country's sanctions put in place to express disapproval of another country – saying that it can drive that country into "further poverty and isolation". Trull highlights the responsibility of global citizens to "ensure that everyone's right to life, health, and wellbeing in

respected during political disputes or conflicts between states”. Trull emphasises the role of social workers and their engagement and interest in people’s health and wellbeing, saying that there was a total of 8000 community-led cooperatives. Ultimately, the IFSW calls upon the Council to acknowledge the necessity for separation of people’s health and social development from geo-political sanction in an effort to better respect the rights of humans.

Global Health Interventions for those with Drug Dependence

Ann Fordham from the IDPC (International Drug Policy Consortium) discusses the human rights impact of drug policies, explaining the human rights catastrophe that has resulted through the way that “justice” is used to address this crisis. She further details the current inefficacy of the justice system, revealing that “the death penalty for drug offenses, extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detention in certain ‘drug rehabilitation centres’, mass incarceration, criminalization, and the militarized eradication of crop” is heavily contributing to the perpetuation of the drug crisis and a continuation of harmful drug policies. The vast number of individuals struggling with addiction and lack of services provided to them is highlighted, as she says, “Worldwide, only one in eight people with drug dependence have access to evidence-based health interventions”. In many cases the situations of these individuals are worsened, and further harm is caused. Fordham describes this as fuel to the HIV epidemic and the rise in overdose deaths. Through her speech she presents the idea of introducing a new initiative that is focused on guaranteeing the UN human rights system has the ability to review and share their voice within the global drug control regime and the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs.

The Refugee Crisis and the Double Suffering of Afghan Women

The speaker, Razia Arefi, Mothers for Peace, highlights her experience as a little child in Iran and as a mother in Pakistan. In both areas she describes being treated as a *muhajir*, meaning that she was treated as though she was homeless and an unwelcome guest. She then discusses experiencing this feeling in the context of her home being destroyed. Arefi describes the jarring devastation that she faced alongside other Afghan women. This emphasises the severity of the refugee crisis and calls the listeners and all international organisations to action in hopes of alleviating the suffering that Afghan women continue to endure – as they are under the anti-woman rule of the Taliban and face objectification.

— Give the gift of education —

Give the gift of education to women and girls around the world by contributing to our new Girls’ Education for Brighter Futures Post- COVID-19 programme, which directly supports GWI’s advocacy work and projects held throughout the world to remove socio-cultural, gender-related and economic barriers girls face towards education endeavours. If you want to learn more about this project, you can read GWI’s latest Global Giving report on this program by clicking [HERE](#). GWI appreciates your donation [HERE](#).

— Did you know? —

Did you know that GWI has a new intern? Meet Lexi Chelle!



Lexi Chelle, GWI Intern

Hi! I am from the United States. I grew up in Colorado and now go to school in New Hampshire at Dartmouth College. I am majoring in sociology and plan to minor in African and African American studies and geography. I started my internship in the middle of March and wanted to become a part of the GWI family because I am immensely interested in advocating for the educational rights and equality of women around the world and increasing their access to resources and opportunities. I have a passion for working towards equality amongst children, as in the past I have done

a project to collect school supplies for foster children and also spent Summer of 2022 interning at the Mesa County Department of Human Services. I am excited to work with Graduate Women International, as it will allow gain a deeper understanding of the inner workings of an international NGO, strengthen my skills, and work alongside a remarkable community of graduate women from all around the world. Thank you for welcoming me into the GWI family, I am so thankful to be working with you all.

— Dates and events worth noting —

27 Feb-31 March	Human Rights Council 52 nd session, Geneva
21 April	World Creativity and Innovation Day, Global
23 April	World Book and Copyright Day, Global
25 April	Orange Day, Global
27 April	International Girls in ICT Day, Global

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GWI, formerly IFUW, is in special consultative status with ECOSOC since 1947
and is an NGO maintaining official relations with UNESCO and ILO.

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