



# Press Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **On International Girls in ICT Day, Graduate Women International Envisions Young Girls as ICT Creators: Access to Digital Education is Critical**

**Geneva, Switzerland, 27 April 2023**— Girls in ICT Day is an International Telecommunications Union (ITU) backed initiative, celebrated annually on the fourth Thursday in April that aims to create a global environment that encourages girls and young women to consider careers in the growing Information and Communications Technology (ICT) professional sector. Graduate Women International (GWI) celebrates this year's theme "Digital Skills for Life", by reiterating its commitment to advancing the status of women and girls through quality education and lifelong learning up to the highest levels. GWI stresses to educational systems and bodies of power that they need to ensure that girls and women have equal access to digital learning skills, enabling industries and girls to mutually reap the benefits of greater workforce equality.

Women account for only 30% of the world's science and technology professionals, representing the [global digital gender divide](#); the global gender gap stands at 8% (ITU). The digital gender divide is the amalgamation of women facing a gap in access to the Internet, digital skills and their participation in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) fields, and a gap in tech sector leadership and entrepreneurship. The ambitious United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are unachievable until the digital gender gap is closed.

GWI President Patrice Wellesley-Cole highlights GWI's commitment to digital education while referencing the GWI Women and [STEM Policy Resolution](#), saying, "GWI recognizes that the digital education gender gap is not merely an educational issue but one of support and retention". "Governmental systems need to promote STEM amongst girls and young women, especially within educational systems, by providing more STEM-based learning program opportunities in primary and tertiary schools as she stressed recently to the [52<sup>nd</sup> session of the Human Rights Council](#)," she adds.

GWI is encouraged by the opportunities and professions in technology fields and are optimistic that the number of girls filling positions in ICT careers is continuously increasing. We acknowledge that women's access to ICT is at an all-time high – as [the rate of girls graduating from ICT-related university programs has increased](#) by 10% (United Nations). Even so, [a recent study by UN Women and ITU](#) reveals that there is a lack of research addressing the effectiveness of online learning from a gender perspective and the lack of digitally confident teachers which, ultimately, influences young women to pursue technology careers later in life. This creates a Call for Action for governments, school systems, and organizations that hold educational influence to support STEM enrichment programs for girls, to train teachers in digital literacy, and to collaborate with ICT sector leaders to offer programs that expose girls to real-world ICT experiences.

About GWI: 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.

*Contributing to this press release is Spring 2023 intern, Alexis Chelle, Dartmouth College*

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