



GWI UPDATE – 27 March 2024 (Amended)



— Graduate Women International (GWI) News —

GWI Call to Action: Advancing Education and Justice Against Racial Discrimination

As the world commemorates the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, marked annually on 21 March, GWI reaffirms in a press release its commitment to combating all forms of racial discrimination through safe access to quality education and lifelong training. Aligned with the 2024 theme, "A Decade of Recognition, Justice, and Development: Implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent," the press release emphasizes the critical importance of recognizing, promoting justice, and fostering development for people of African descent, alongside combating racial discrimination globally. **Read the full press release [HERE](#).**

On World Water Day, GWI underscores intersection between water and education

On World Water Day (WWD), celebrated annually on 22 March, GWI underscores the critical intersection of water scarcity and gender inequality in accessing education, highlighting the disproportionate impact on women compared to men. Emphasizing the urgent need for action, GWI advocates for heightened awareness and intervention in water-related issues, directly threatening women's and girls' access to education and empowerment. **Read the full press release [HERE](#).**

It's a wrap! GWI successfully hosts three Parallel Events for the 68th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68) hosting 456 participants

As CSW68 comes to an end, GWI looks back on some very successful parallel events:

On 12 March 2024, GWI Vice President (VP) Education, Shirley Gillett, and Lucia Guzman, Chair of the Education Committee, hosted and moderated the first parallel event: *Educating Outside the Classroom: Women's Museums Empowering Girls and Women*. This event focused

women's museums, or sections within existing museums, emphasizing their importance as public assets, especially for women, and the importance of funding women's museums to advance gender equality. The parallel event featured GWI Education Committee (EduCom) speakers from various countries. Nesrin KOÇ, a member of the Turkish Association of University Women (TAUW), spoke about empowering Turkish women through museums, illustrating how their tangible experiences help communicate ancestral experiences and cultural heritage. Confidence Dikgole, a member of the South African Association of Women Graduates (SAAWG), spoke about South Africa's women's museums and their spotlight on female heroines during the apartheid. Geneviève Adukpo, from the Ghana Association of University Women (GAUW), talked about museums as a unique way to educate and empower women and girls in an authentic and interactive manner. Patricia Galeana, President of the Mexican Federation of University Women (FEMU) and previous VP of the International Federation of University Women (IFUW), now GWI, highlighted her motivation behind creating Mexico's only women's museum. Lastly, Shirley Randell, a member of the Australian Graduate Women (AGW) spoke about the importance of women's museums in Australia by creating a platform to celebrate "her space." **Watch the event recording [HERE](#).**

On 18 March 2024, GWI VP Advocacy, Shaila Rao Mistry, hosted the parallel event on: *Financial Institutions and Infrastructure Perpetuating Poverty – Gender Bias in Economic Policy*. This event explored inhibitive financial policies and exposed the causal linkage with poverty, and the intersectionality of infrastructures with mindsets, which continuously exclude women's economic participation. This parallel event highlighted two knowledge experts including Hana Brixi, the World Bank Global Director for Gender and manager of the Human Capital Project who spoke about the collective effort that is required to push gender equality, and Dr. Monique Newlak, the Deputy Unit Chief of the Inclusion and Gender Unit at the International Monetary Fund who spoke about integrating a gender lens into macroeconomic policy. **Watch the event recording [HERE](#).**

On 19 March 2024, under the leadership of GWI Young Member Network (YMN) President and GWI Treasurer, Sudha Srivastava, with the support of young members, the YMN held the third parallel event: *Sustainable Financing for Gender Equality: Young Women's Perspective*. This interactive event addressed the intersection of sustainable financing and the gender perspective. It featured four speakers from the GWI YMN, followed by breakout room sessions providing feedback on the main session. Sudha Srivastava, GWI Treasurer and YMN President, started by providing insights from the United Kingdom, specifically about gender responsive budgeting and moved to collective responsibility to accelerate progress and invest in women, highlighting support for women's rights organization and movements as a means to achieve this. Tzazil Valencia, FEMU, addressed the role of women entrepreneurs in debunking stereotypes and empowering others. She addressed the difficulty women have in becoming entrepreneurs in areas that are not stereotypically feminine and the importance of overcoming this challenge and break traditional gender roles. Next Valencia gave the floor to Cynthia Adinortey, (GAUW) who delved into the rapid transformation of access to education for women and girls in Ghana over the last decade, reporting that Ghana has almost complete parity for primary and secondary education since 2019. Unfortunately, some challenges still persist, most which could be prevented with the provision of adequate financing. The last speaker to take the floor, before the session split into breakout rooms, was Lucy Tifere, from Graduate Women Fiji. She outlined the significance of scholarships and grants for women in

STEM, of which she is also a proud recipient. These grants represent hope, opportunity, and empowerment for women. They breakdown the pervasive financial barriers that women too often face. **Watch this highly interactive session [HERE](#).**

A comprehensive summary of these events can be found [HERE](#).

— GWI Member News —

GWI YMN hosts International Women’s Day Conversation Series

GWI’s YMN hosted inter-generational celebrations to mark International Women’s Day (IWD) 2024. IWD theme for this year is “Inspire Inclusion.” All GWI members were invited to share their stories on how they inspired inclusion in their community, workplace, family, country, and globe. The event was an ‘open mic’ format; members brought their thoughts, and stories.

Srivastava initiated the proceedings and served as a wonderful moderator for this installment of the YMN Conversation Series. GWI president Patrice Wellesley-Cole gave a speech and provided valuable guidance to the community. Valencia, FEMU, took the floor and shared her collaborative writing experiences. Her writing was motivational, mentioning the importance of female role models and exemplifying the impact through an anecdotal story with her nieces. Next, GWI’s Executive Director, Stacy Dry Lara, shared her insights with the community and offered friendly words on women's achievements. Then, the floor opened to the audience, inviting voices worldwide to contribute their perspectives. First, the president of the Austrian Federation of Graduate Women, Dr. Reinhild Strauss, spoke on the issue of the social gap in education. This echoed the call by Perine Wagdi, an active young member from the Egypt Association of University Women, to advocate for the importance of education for women to build potential and defend themselves. From the SAAWG, Alu Xonti shared her experiences of striving for inclusion through her work and observance of language and diversity. All speakers are very passionate and believe in the importance of education. On this IWD all expressed the urgency in bringing education to all girls. The celebration was filled with inspiring stories and motivational experiences shared among the community. Furthermore, many speakers and participants showed great enthusiasm by wearing purple to showcase their spirit. **Click [HERE](#) to check out the Conversation Series!**

— GWI at the United Nations —

GWI sponsors Civil Society Speaker Chizuko Suzuki, member of the Japanese Association of University Women (JAUW), to give a statement during the 55th session of the Human Rights Council (HRC55)

GWI-sponsored civil society speaker Chizuko Suzuki, a JAUW member, gave her statement to the HRC55 High-Level Segment and spoke on the topic of access to “Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE).” She began her statement with the universal value of life and love, which should be acknowledged by the international community and making it the basis for education. Suzuki states the importance of CSE developed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) needs to be practised in more nations to reach more youth, particularly girls. It would allow them to develop knowledge and skills to avoid risks that deprive them of further studies and career, such as unexpected pregnancies. Moreover, she calls and urges for the implementation of CSE in public schools and in local governments. **Click [HERE](#) to read Suzuki’s statement. Check in a future Update for the video statement. GWI thanks Suzuki for her intervention.**

GWI participates in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Regional Sustainability Forum held 13-14 March

The regional sustainability forum serves as a platform for review on the progress of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in the UNECE region, which also includes some transcontinental Eurasian countries along with the United States of America and Canada. This is one of the five regions under the jurisdiction of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). During this week-long forum, member states engaged in discussions regarding regional priorities to accelerate progress towards these 2030 goals. Other stakeholders, such as civil society, youth, regional and international organizations, academia, etc., also provided input in numerous ways, including with some impactful side events. GWI actively participated in a multitude of civil society-organised side events. Notably, GWI contributed in the side event: [Gender Sensitive Parliaments: Inclusive Institutions](#). This event was organized by the UN Women Europe and Central Asia office, along with the European Institute for Gender Equality. During this event, important insights were shared on the representation of women in parliaments in the UNECE region. Kareen Jabre, Director of the Division of Programs from the Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU) shared that there are only 26.9% women in the United Kingdom’s parliament, which only represents a 0.4 percentile point increase, a significantly smaller increase than previous years. Moreover, Milva Ekonomi, Minister of State for Standards and Services in the Albanian, shared that there is a quota of minimum 30% of women candidates per political party that must run for parliamentary seats in Albania. This quota has allowed the country to surpass this minimum and reach an impressive 43.7% of women in parliament. Additionally, from the European Institute for Gender Equality, Elena Anchevska shared that only 11 national parliaments in Europe have explicit policies for maternity leave, and only four member states have policies outright outlawing gender discrimination. These measures are crucial to ensure more vertical representation of women. On a more positive note, in the European Parliament, six out of the 14 vice presidents are women, in addition to Roberta Metsola who has been serving as president of the European Parliament since 2022 and was one of Malta’s first female Members of the European Parliament when she was elected in 2013.

— Give the Gift of Education —

Give the gift of education to women and girls around the world by contributing to our [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.

— Did you know? —

GWI counts among its former members renowned and inspiring female role models who contributed to great scientific progress and inventions

Among them is **Ellen Gleditsch, a specialist in radiochemistry** who served as Vice-President of the IFUW, now GWI, from 1924 to 1926. She also held the position of President of IFUW from 1926 to 1929. Particularly, she was the first women professor in Norway, playing a crucial role when Norway acquired its first radium. She worked alongside the famous scientist and physicist **Marie Curie**, who was not only the **first woman to receive a Nobel Prize**, but also the only woman to be honoured with two Nobel prizes after her discoveries of Polonium and Radium. Furthermore, Curie was the honorary president of l'Association des Française Femmes Diplômés des Universités (AFFDU) from 1922 until 1934.

In the field of medicine, **Doha Gohneim became the first Pediatric Neurologist in Egypt**, and dedicated her career to the prevention and treatment of Poliomyelitis. She introduced the first artificial respirator in Egypt, and In 1995, Ghoneim was recognized by UNICEF for her national vaccination campaign, which resulted in the total eradication of the disease by 1994. These inspiring stories demonstrate the critical role of women's participation across all disciplines in fostering social and scientific sustainable development. GWI emphasizes **the necessity of dismantling gendered barriers and overcoming gender stereotypes** that hinder women and girls from entering traditionally male-dominated fields. By doing so, we can strive towards achieving equality and sustainable development. **Discover additional information about other GWI members in the report titled ["Inspiring a Vision: Pioneers and Other Women"](#)** edited by Anne Holden Rønning and produced by Louise McLeod.

— Dates and events —

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| 21 March | International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination |
| 22 March | World Water Day |
| 06 April | International Day of Sport for Development and Peace |
| 23 April | World Book and Copyright Day |
| 25 April | International Girls in ICT Day |
| 26 April | Deadline EMRTD call for inputs |
| 10-13 Sept 2025 | GWI 35 th General Assembly and Conference |

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Empowering women and girls through lifelong education for leadership, decision-making and peace.

GWl, 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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