



GW I UPDATE – 2 July 2025



Dr. Irene Ighodaro MBE, medical Doctor in Britain, advocate for women's rights, pioneer of health and education in Britain and West Africa

— Graduate Women International (GWI) News —

Dr. Irene Ighodaro, Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE): A Pioneer in Medicine and Women's Rights Honoured

The Lord Mayor of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, England Councillor Henry Gallagher unveiled a plaque to commemorate the achievements of Dr. Irene Ighodaro MBE (nee Wellesley-Cole) 1916-1995 Physician, Social reformer and Aunt of GWI President Patrice Wellesley-Cole on Wednesday, 25 June 2025 in the City. The short ceremony was attended by her son Anthony who gave a commemorative speech, his wife Clara, Aunty Irene's daughter in law Adiba, Wellesley-Cole, guests, historian Dr. Beverley Prevatt - Goldstein (who had conducted the research), local press and regional TV.

The plaque reads she was: "the first Sierra Leonean woman to qualify as a medical Doctor in Britain, advocate for women's rights, pioneer of health and education in Britain and West Africa lived in Eskdale Terrace 1935-1943 during her medical training." The plaque is on this building which is still a student hall.

After qualifying she practised in the City with her elder brother Wellesley-Cole's father Dr. Robert Wellesley-Cole running his medical practice for a year when he was on government

committees. During the War she manned the decontamination squad, tended casualties, worked at the Royal Victoria Infirmity (RVI) and was active in the African voluntary sector. Their Wartime service was the subject of the City's Discovery Museum exhibition in 2022 that Wellesley-Cole attended with BFWG's Gill Ramsay.

A former Chair of the Nigerian Association of University Women, on several committees including the YWCA World Executive, WHO Consultant, author of "Baby's first year", she is featured on a mural outside Guy's hospital in London since 2024 with other health professionals. The Dr. Irene Ighodaro Memorial Foundation was established to continue her legacy of the advancement of women.

This posthumous honour for her groundbreaking achievements recognises her trailblazing work in medicine and visionary leadership, of which the family is justifiably proud as is GWI. She is the first woman of colour to get a blue plaque in the City. With this plaque, she has made History. **GWI congratulates Wellesley-Cole and pays tribute to her aunt for her posthumous recognition.**

35th Triennial General Assembly and Conference registration

Early Bird registration is now open for the GWI 35th General Assembly and Conference to take place 11–13 September 2025 at the Mulungushi International Conference Centre in Lusaka, Zambia. GWI members are encouraged to register for the General Assembly, and the Conference, held on 13 September 2025, is open to the public. The Conference will explore the priority theme "*Building the Future: Integrating Culture, Education, and Empowerment for Sustainability*" through a rich programme addressing five interrelated sub-themes:

- **Education and empowerment for women in diverse contexts:** Pathways to a sustainable future
- **Future contexts:** How education, culture, gender, and the economy will evolve
- **Gender-based cultural issues and barriers in education:** Promoting gender equity
- **Intergenerational and community connections:** Enabling growth and sustainability
- **Technology, AI, and Innovation:** Empowering women for the future

The registration provides access to all sessions, keynote addresses, related conference materials, workshops, seminars, and networking breaks. Don't miss the opportunity to engage in meaningful dialogue, gain valuable insights, and connect with a global community working to advance gender equality and education. Early Bird registration closes on 31 August 2025. **Click [HERE](#) to register.** Guests are welcome to register for the public Conference on 13 September.

— GWI Member News —

GWI hosts special webinar to mark World Refugee Day and showcase the Hegg Hoffet program

On 20 June, GWI hosted a webinar to present the Hegg Hoffet (HH) Fund for Displaced Women Graduates and showcase HH grant recipients. This webinar, titled “Pathway to professional reintegration for displaced women graduates through the Hegg Hoffet Fund”, was an opportunity for HH Committee members to present the history, application process, and benefits of the HH Fund. The event also featured powerful testimonials from the 2024 beneficiaries of the HH Fund: Ghadah Al-Bukhaiti from Yemen, Franger Yaniska Camejo from Venezuela, and Kubra Hussaini from Afghanistan.

Ghadah, a refugee doctor now based in the UK, used the Fund to finance nine professional courses in the medical field. This support has helped her regain confidence and reintegrate into clinical practice.

Franger, an industrial engineer living in the USA, was able to take English courses thanks to the Fund. It is an essential step toward fulfilling her goal of contributing her expertise to her new community.

Kubra, a refugee in the USA, used the Fund to cover her tuition for a master’s degree in social work at Arizona State University. Her ambition is to gain advanced knowledge in social work, research, and policy analysis in order to design innovative solutions for complex social challenges, especially those impacting marginalized groups.

The webinar concluded with a renewed call to support the HH Fund. As part of the upcoming GWI Triennial in Lusaka, Zambia, a HH Boutique will be hosted, and attendees are encouraged to bring items to donate for sale in support of the Fund. Access the recording of the webinar [HERE](#).

— GWI at the United Nations —

NGO Committee for Social Development report submitted by Maryella Hannum

The GWI UN Advocacy Report, by Maryella Hannum, GWI United Nations Representative, New York outlines key priorities discussed during the NGO Committee for Social Development (NGO CSocD) planning meetings ahead of the Second World Summit for Social Development (2WSS) in November 2025. The report emphasizes GWI’s long-term advocacy goals, including universal access to secondary education for girls, increased tertiary education access for women in low-income countries, and lifelong learning opportunities for women across formal and informal sectors. It also highlights the importance of integrating girls’ education targets into all 17

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). NGO CSocD's broader advocacy focuses on addressing poverty, unemployment, and social exclusion, with planned meetings with UN Member States to align efforts and promote inclusive, resilient societies through the principles of the Copenhagen Declaration and the 2030 Agenda. **Read Hannum's full report [HERE](#). GWI thanks Hannum for her continued participation and leadership in the NGO CSocD.**

The NGO CSocD Advocacy Priorities

Complementing Hannum's report are the NGO CSocD Advocacy Priorities for the 2WSS that emphasise urgent global action on poverty eradication, decent work, social inclusion, and resilience. The priorities are the implementation of inclusive and gender-responsive social protection systems, the access to decent work and fair wages and the elimination of structural inequalities. The committee advocates for making digital technology a public good, tackling discrimination in all forms, and promoting the meaningful participation of marginalized groups. The committee also urges stronger commitments to social resilience to better prepare societies for ongoing crises and highlights the lack of actionable language in the current Zero Draft of the Political Declaration. It calls for more concrete commitments, especially in areas such as gender-based violence, homelessness, and civil society engagement. **Read the document [HERE](#).**

GWI attends UNESCO event on Racism and Discriminations

On 26 June 2025, GWI attended the UNESCO event titled "*Towards a Global Alliance against Racism and Discriminations*". The Global alliance serves as a space to exchange experiences and good practices, produce knowledge, concrete commitments, coalesce international and regional institutions and strengthen accountability in advancing the international agenda for racial equity and justice. UNESCO invests in data and research, advances affirmative policies, supports local governments and the network of anti-racism and anti-discrimination officials, builds awareness and developing competencies through training and education and advocates for the promotion of historical awareness by recognizing places. One of UNESCO's initiatives, the Master Class against Racism and discrimination aims to empower young people. The youth are placed at the centre of advocacy and community change and produce actions against exclusion and inequality in their schools. During the round table, the panelists (Spain, Saudi Arabia, Council of Europe, Racism working group (UNOG), Sierra Leone, Kenya, Belgium, UNRISP, UNFPA, UEFA, UN Women, UNITAR and the Watch & Jewelry Initiative 2030) were asked two questions: How can UNESCO better support governments in their initiatives for the fight against racism, and what initiatives are you putting in place or planning to put in place in your country or your organisation to work against racism. Through its continued international advocacy with UNESCO, GWI reaffirms its commitment to eradicating racism and racial discrimination as a means to increase education opportunities for women and girls. **GWI thanks interns, Suzanne Nette and Célia Cherel, for their extensive coverage of the event.**

— Give the Gift of Membership —

The GWI Independent Member network is growing, with many new members joining from around the world over the past few months. A thoughtful gift for the graduate woman in your life is a GWI membership. There are many benefits of being a member of GWI, including belonging to an influential international NGO composed of graduate women influencing policy and legislation on women's issues at the international level and gaining an international perspective on women's issues through networking activities. Click [HERE](#) to find out how to join GWI.

— Did you know? —

The Heritage Fundraising Wall

Did you know that GWI was founded on 11 July 1919? The special Heritage Fundraising Wall commemorating GWI 105 years will close on 11 July 2025. The GWI 105th Anniversary Heritage Fundraising Wall has raised more than \$11,000 to date confirming our confidence in our members, National Federations and Associations, groups and individuals, family and friends' belief in the GWI mission and support for girls' education. But even more can be done before we reach the end of July 2025. Let's rally together for a strong final push and help complete the wall! Join us and make a donation [HERE](#). Every donation helps. We understand that not everyone is able to give a large amount, so we've made smaller donation options available on the wall. Donations can be made in amounts of \$50, \$105, \$205, \$505, \$1,005 or an amount of your preference. Your donations directly support the continuing work of GWI. **GWI sincerely thanks Dr. Shirley Gillett, GWI VP Education, for her vision and leadership in fundraising for the Heritage Fundraising Wall.**

— Dates and Events —

15 July	World Youth Skills Day
30 July	World Day against Trafficking in Persons
31 July	Pan-African Women's Day
9 August	International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples
12 August	World Youth Day
8 September	International Literacy Day
11-13 September	GWI 35th Triennial General Assembly, Lusaka, Zambia

Follow us on social media!



2025 Copyright. All Rights Reserved.

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

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

Graduate Women International

7-9, Chemin de Balexert, CH-1291, Châtelaine, Geneva, Switzerland

E-mail: gwi@graduatewomen.org Website: www.graduatewomen.org

