

Press Release

On World Book and Copyright Day Graduate Women International calls for governments and policy makers to ensure access to information for every child, particularly girls

Geneva, Switzerland, 23 April 2016 – On the occasion of World Book and Copyright Day Graduate Women International (GWI) calls for governments and policy makers to embrace the Sustainable Development goals for Education and Gender Equality, agreed in September 2015. Although the literacy rate among youth aged 15 to 24 increased globally from 83% to 91% between 1990 and 2015, and the gap between women and men has narrowed, attention to girls is needed. Currently, the total estimated number of children of primary school age out of school is down from 100 million in 2000 to 57 million in 2015. Of these, more than 55% are girls¹. GWI strongly urges policy makers to reinforce their commitments to ensure that all children have universal access to quality primary and secondary education, and girls in particular.

Supporting public libraries, developing access programmes to reading materials at all levels of formal and informal education, literacy courses for young girls and women, mobile libraries and maintaining internet spaces where girls and women can access online books, all contribute to increasing literacy rates and encouraging reading habits.

Catherine Bell, GWI President, states that “Reading regularly has many benefits including building knowledge, and it is one of the key criteria for quality education as defined by the Learning Metrics Task Force². Children need to acquire reading habits early in order to advance through life confidently.”

Graduate Women International calls for governments to keep developing their literacy programs, and for parents to embrace children's multichannel literacy skills in the increasingly digital world. A survey by charity BookTrust in February 2015 revealed that despite the availability of both print and digital books, children in the UK preferred print books both for reading for pleasure and reading for education. In fact, 76% of surveyed parents said that their children preferred print books for reading for pleasure, for reasons such as the enjoyment of turning the book's pages, owning their own book and choosing books from the library.

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Graduate Women International (GWI) is a membership-based international NGO based in Geneva, Switzerland, with presence in over 80 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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¹ The Millenium Development Goals Report 2015

² The Brookings Center for Universal Education

¹The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015