

Graduate Women International

GWI is us. Don't think of GWI as some women over there on the other side of the ocean. GWI is our club along with some 22,000 other women around the world. As a large international group, we have a voice.

Where? In international forums where minds are changed and solutions found for problems

Why? GWI is focused on education for women, especially secondary and tertiary education, and training up to the highest levels.

Our vision is 100% of girls and women achieving education beyond primary school.

We have a long way to go:

Almost 5 million females in the world are illiterate, with not even primary school. 34 million female adolescents are not in school.

Only 36% of women worldwide enrol in secondary schooling.

What? What are we doing about this through GWI:

ADVOCACY

PROJECTS

1. PROJECTS that work toward solutions to problems

I'll mention just two projects in Africa, working toward solutions to problems.

- in some parts of rural Uganda, girls cannot go to secondary school because there is no female teacher. GWI leads a project to fund scholarships and a mentoring program for young women to become teachers and role models and advocates for girls' education in their communities. 70% of Uganda's population is under 25, so the need is great. In the years ahead, more girls will be able to go to school.

- in Rwanda, GWI collaborates with the Orange Network, a cell phone and Internet company on a project called Girl's Choices Mobile App. Orange provides the network, GWI provides the content to reaching girls in high school on their cell phones. Girls who don't

advance to tertiary education often marry very young. The training shows them different career paths, and meets them where they are, on their cell phones.

These are just two of the innovative projects that GWI supports, finding solutions to problems that keep girls from getting an education. Read about the others on the GWI website.

2. ADVOCACY

- Much of our GWI work is focused on Advocacy, trying to change minds
- As GWI, we have Special Consultative Status at the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. Each year in March our members attend the Commission on the Status of Women meetings in New York. CFUW also has special consultative status and attends those meetings too.
- Besides these annual New York meetings, our GWI representatives take our vision to meetings in the other major UN sites: Paris, Geneva, and Vienna. We have a total of 14 or 15 women who represent us at these forums.
- You may not want to do that work, but there are women who do it for us and who do it well.
- They are NOT paid by us; they are volunteer professional women, members of GWI.
- They attend meetings of the various UN NGO (Non-governmental organizations) committees and meet other NGO representatives, and sometimes work together with them, to write papers and to prepare side events.
 - Barbara Newbegin and I interviewed two of these representatives. (Report in the April Carillon and on the website under Study and Interest groups – Focus on GWI) In Vienna, Elisabeth Francis, a member of the Austrian University Women, attends NGO Committees on Status of Women, on Peace, and on the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations.

- In Geneva, our representative Nina Joyce, attends the NGO CSW committee and the NGO Working Group on Human Rights, Education and Learning

What do these women who represent us accomplish by their ADVOCACY on our behalf?

Nina says international work is slow. Often things are accomplished by corridor conversations. People change their attitudes slowly.

But they keep the issue of women's education before the decision makers of the world. Just a month ago, the theme of the CSW meetings in New York, was the economic empowerment of women in the changing world of work

WE in GWI are active in the international world where attitudes can be changed and solutions found for problems that prevent the education of girls and women.

A CFUW-Ottawa Project to Support our GWI Sisters

Now I want to tell you about a new project in our CFUW-Ottawa club. I would like to enlist your support.

As you know, last fall we launched a new study group called Focus on GWI. At our February meeting, a blustery storm night that kept many members away, we just tried to think of ways we could support women in developing countries who were trying to get an education. We thought of all the books in our houses, many that we don't want or need. Might they be useful to others?

We asked Hally to talk to Stacy Dry Lara (Executive Director GWI) when she met her in New York last month. Did she think any NFAs might want books? Stacy apparently sent out a message to NFAs asking that question, and now we have several replies requesting books. University women in Samoa and in Sierra Leone sent emails almost immediately. We had not anticipated such speedy replies.

Now we need a team to figure out how to send books, to gather the requested books from our members, and to get them to the right people at minimal cost. The team may also need

to raise funds for shipping, though both Samoa and Sierra Leone suggested that they would raise funds for shipping.

If you would like to help your GWI friends with this worthwhile project please see me after the talk.

With Malala Yousafzai, I say, and I hope you will say:

I stand with girls. I seize every opportunity to support girls' education.

"I stand with girls, as someone who knows how it feels to have your right of education taken away and your dreams threatened. I know where I stand. If you stand with me, I ask you to seize every opportunity for girls' education over the next year."