GWCIA 30

Letter from the Chair

Dear Delegates,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the United Nations Program for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women Committee (UN Women) at GWCIA XXX. I'm Gabby Greer, and I'm excited to be your chair for the committee this year!

As a third-year at George Washington University, I have been studying International Affairs with a concentration in International Development. This is my second year here in DC, after I spent my first year of university abroad in Paris, which has helped my studies immensely. I'm a part of GW's Model UN team, competing at conferences like HOPMUNC and staffing conferences like WAMUNC and last year's GWCIA. Model UN has been such an enriching experience for me throughout high school and college, and I'm so glad that all of you are getting started much sooner than I did.

Outside of Model UN, I'm a Managing Editor for GW's Undergraduate International Affairs journal 'The Globe', as well as the Pre-Law Student Association's Justice Journal. One of my favorite activities on campus, however, has been hosting my radio show every week at WRGW. I've loved being a part of campus at GW, as well as getting to know the city of DC (especially its various bookstores and museums).

As a student of politics and as a woman, these issues are especially important to me, but you do not have to fit into either of those categories to feel the impact of women and girls being restricted from academic and political fields. Around the world, countries benefit economically and socially when women are able to realize their full potential and make their voices heard. Although progress has been made in various nations, barriers remain that continue to restrict access for women and require innovative solutions, which I hope to discuss throughout our committee sessions.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to voice them via email. Anything from the topics, committee, or just general introductions are welcome, and I look forward to meeting you all soon!

Best wishes,

Gabby Greer

Topic 1: Equal Access to Education for Women and Girls

One of the most pressing issues for women and girls around the world is equal access to education. In fact, UN Women estimates that "in the last 20 years, 122 million girls remain out of school globally." Therefore, this issue is widespread and continuous. Unfortunately, this issue also has lasting consequences. When women and girls cannot receive education, they can face higher levels of violence and higher poverty rates. Additionally, women and girls make up about half the population, so significant barriers in women and girls' access to education means that we have much less people to solve global issues! Many obstacles contribute to the number of girls that remain out of school, including poverty, prioritization of boys' education, gender stereotypes, child marriage, and outright education bans.

Some of the largest barriers in access to education for women and girls are simply resources. For example, according to the World Bank, "in low-income countries, secondary school completion rates for girls also continue to lag, with only 38% of girls completing lower secondary school compared to 43% of boys." Additionally, many children do not have access to the internet, which is increasingly becoming crucial for an effective education. In fact, UN Women data shows that as many as 9 out of 10 girls in low-income countries do not have access to the internet. Therefore, limited resources is a significant issue for equal access to education. This issue is worsened by the prioritization of boys' education over girls' education. In low-income countries many of the limited resources are directed towards an education for boys. As demonstrated by the World Bank data, boys are more likely than girls receive a secondary education in low-income countries. Additionally, even with the UN Women data, the study found that boys were twice as likely as their female peers to be online. Therefore limited

resources and prioritization of boys' education over girls' education make equal access to education a significant challenge around the world.

Another broad issue that impacts girls' ability to access education is gender stereotypes. Not only are boys' education privileged above girls' education, but according to the Malala Fund there are still significant "deep-rooted beliefs about gender" that impact girls' access to education around the globe. This is not helped by the global issue of child marriage, which significantly impacts girls ability to receive an education. According to Girls Not Brides, "12 million girls marry before the age of 18 every year." When girls get married young, they usually do not finish school, and are expected to take on a more caregiving role in the household. Therefore, child marriage continues to be a significnat issue for girls around the world in receiving equal access to education. Finally, another incredibly pressing issue when it comes to women's access to education is bans on education. While outright bans are less common than other obstacles to education, they still occur in countries like Afghanistan. The current regime in Afghanistan has placed an outright ban on secondary education for girls. According to UNSECO, this means that 1.4 million girls have been deprived of schooling in Afghanistan. While outright bans may not be widespread, many of these other factors play into the more subtle bans on girls' education around the world.

Some solutions have been proposed that deal with some of these obstacles. For example, funding schools for girls is an incredibly helpful way to ensure that girls living in areas with

limited resources have easier access to education. Additionally, many of the solutions proposed deal with more root issues such as gender stereotypes and girls' leadership. For example, in Mexico, the Ministry of Education has distributed a gender curriculum, which will help teachers across the country learn more about gender stereotypes and issues that women and girls in the country face. These types of programs develop more gender awareness, and thus help increase the number of women and girls in schools. Additionally, UNESCO is constantly monitoring countries in areas around the globe that face some of the most drastic gaps in education such as the Caribbean, in order to evaluate what future programs could be helpful and how to implement them successfully. Finally, in Brazil, the #EDUCASTEM2030 is a project designed to support girls' education in STEM. This not only includes training for students but also for teachers. The program's training includes advocacy, networking, and mentorship. Therefore, these are just a few ways that the issue of equal access to education is being addressed around the globe currently!

Research Questions:
- What are the largest barriers to women's access to education?
- What is the role of gender stereotypes in barriers to women's access to education?
- How can the internet provide solutions to unequal access to education?
- Does gender discrimination play a role in women's access to education?
- How does poverty impact women's access to education?
- What solutions have been successful in increasing women's access to education? How can these solutions be improved?

Topic 2: Increasing Women's Political Participation

Another issue facing women around the world is their limited participation in politics. According to UN Women data, "at the current rate, gender equality in the highest positions of power will not be reached for another 130 years." These positions of power include heads of government and heads of state, like the president of the United States. Therefore, there are still significant obstacles and barriers that women face in political participation, and this issue is not only global, but one that requires long-term solutions that will hopefully lower the number of years until gender equality has been reached in the highest positions of power. Women's participation in all levels of government is incredibly important, as women not only have unique experiences, but also data has shown that higher levels of women in government are associated with lower risks of civil war. Additionally, women are half of the population and thus deserve an equal voice in decisions made in government! Some of the most significant barriers to women's political participation are access to political resources, limited mentorship opportunities, harassment, and gender stereotypes.

Unsurprisingly, one of the biggest barriers that women face in terms of political participation is access to resources for entering a political party or campaigning. Not only are there political legacies in many countries that make it difficult for women to enter the fold of politics, but also according to UN Women, many women in developing countries cannot even afford the "modest candidate registration fees." This stems from many women having economic dependency on men. The World Economic Forum describes this as that "having fewer financial resources puts women overall on the "outsider track" and in a disadvantaged position from the get-go." Therefore monetary resources can be a significant obstacle for a woman running for political office.

Similarly, many women lack leadership networks that are used to develop further understanding of politics and government, engage with constituents, and become a more central part of a political party. This issue is almost cyclical. Since there are so few women in politics to begin with, it is difficult for other women to not only learn from women in positions of political power, but also to see themselves as able to be a political leader. A Pew Research poll shows that 73% of Americans see the fact that "women aren't encouraged to be leaders from an early age" as an obstacle to women's political participation. Therefore, lack of mentorship opportunities for women also makes it difficult to run for office.

Another issue that is discussed heavily when considering women's political participation is harassment. Unfortunately, many of the women that overcome the financial barriers to run for office still face harassment during elections and even after being elected. Sometimes this harassment can go as far as threats or violence. The European Union recently released a briefing that commented on the violence that takes place against women in politics, and that it "discourages many women from entering the political arena." Additionally, the internet has deepened the issue. Data from UN Women shows that the rise of artificial intelligence has also been used to harass female political candidates and politicians. Therefore, fear of violence is a significant obstacle to women's full participation in politics. This issue stems from an even larger issue, which is harmful gender stereotypes meant to keep women out of politics. Even in 2025, many voters have bias against women and many political parties will choose to take on a male candidate over a female candidate because they believe that the male candidate has a higher chance of winning. This stems from the belief that women cannot be politicians, or if they are politicians, they are not going to be as good as their male counterparts. While this cannot be proven, it is still a harmful stereotype that exists and acts as a

barrier for women trying to enter politics. Therefore, gender stereotypes, along with harassment, are large obstacles for women's political participation.

There are several solutions that have dealt with some of these issues. For example, one common solution is quotas. According to the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace, and Security, quotas are usually the most effective when they not only include consequences for failing to meet the quotas, as well as a specific numerical target that the quotas must reach. This has been successfully implemented in places like Australia, where the Labor Party in Australia's National Parliament is incredibly close to gender parity. Additionally, leadership programs can be incredibly useful to not only help women develop stronger community networks and mentors, but also to dismantle gender stereotypes. In Tunisia, the Aswat Nissa organization not only trains female candidates on how to run for office, but also encourages women across the country to vote. These types of programs usually need funding, with which international organizations like UN Women, UNESCO, and others, can help. Finally, continued monitoring of solutions like quotas is necessary to ensure that the quotes are being fulfilled and that any other necessary quotas can be

implemented. The International IDEA's Global Database of Gender Quotas is a continuously updated tracker of gender quotas around the world that are used to boost the political participation of women. While all of these solutions are helpful, the current obstacles to women's political participation such as lack of resources, limited mentorship opportunities, harassment, and gender stereotypes, require even more creative ideas to address such a large and impactful issue!

Research Questions:
- What are the largest barriers to women's political participation?
- What is the role of gender stereotypes in women's political participation?
- How does the internet play a role in women's political participation? Can this role be changed?
- How does economic inequality impact women's political participation?
- What is the role of political parties versus voters in improving women's political participation? Are they different?
- What solutions have been successful in increasing women's political participation? How can these solutions be improved?

Works Cited

Aswat Nissa. (n.d.). *Home*. Aswat Nissa. Retrieved June 30, 2025, from

https://www.aswatnissa.org/en/home/

European Parliament. (2024). *Women's political participation in the European Union: Current trends and challenges*. European Parliament. Retrieved June 30, 2025, from

https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI(2024)759600

Girls Not Brides. (n.d.). *Where child marriage happens*. Girls Not Brides. Retrieved June 30, 2025, from

https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/about-child-marriage/where-child-marriage-happens/

Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace, and Security. (n.d.). *Where are the women advancing women's leadership in politics and peacebuilding?* Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace, and Security. Retrieved June 30, 2025, from

https://giwps.georgetown.edu/where-are-the-women-advancing-womens-leadership-in-politics-and-peacebuilding/

GBC Education. (n.d.). *Education is a right, not a privilege for millions of girls and women*. Global Business Coalition for Education. Retrieved June 30, 2025, from

https://gbc-education.org/news-events/education-is-a-right-not-a-privilege-for-millions-of-girls-and-women/

Human Rights Watch. (2024, September 17). *The Taliban's attack on girls' education: Harming Afghanistan's future*. Human Rights Watch. Retrieved June 30, 2025, from

https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/09/17/talibans-attack-girls-education-harming-afghanistans-future

Human Rights Watch. (2025, March 7). *State of women's rights*. Human Rights Watch. Retrieved June 30, 2025, from

https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/03/07/state-womens-rights

Malala Fund. (n.d.). *Girls' education*. Malala Fund. Retrieved June 30, 2025, from

https://malala.org/girls-education

Our World in Data. (n.d.). *Women's political participation index*. Our World in Data. Retrieved June 30, 2025, from

https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/women-political-participation-index

Pew Research Center. (2023, September 27). *Views of obstacles for women seeking high political office*. Pew Research Center. Retrieved June 30, 2025, from

https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2023/09/27/views-of-obstacles-for-women-seeking-high-political-office/

UN Women. (2024, September). *Five actions to boost women's political participation*. UN Women. Retrieved June 30, 2025, from

https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/explainer/2024/09/five-actions-to-boost-womens-political-participation

UN Women. (2025, March). *Fast facts: 30 years of uneven progress for adolescent girls*. UN Women. Retrieved June 30, 2025, from

https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/press-release/2025/03/fast-facts-30-years-of-uneven-progress-for-adolescent-girls

UNESCO. (2023). *UNESCO's efforts to achieve gender equality in and through education: 2023 highlights*. UNESCO. Retrieved June 30, 2025, from

https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000391935

UNESCO. (n.d.). *Gender equality in education*. UNESCO. Retrieved June 30, 2025,

    from https://www.unesco.org/en/gender-equality/education

UNESCO. (2024, September 16). *Afghanistan: 14 million girls still banned from school*

    by de facto authorities. UNESCO. Retrieved June 30, 2025, from

    https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/afghanistan-14-million-girls-still-banned-sc

    hool-de-facto-authorities?hub=343

UNESCO. (n.d.). *Afghanistan: The only country that bans girls' education*. Geneva

    Solutions. Retrieved June 30, 2025, from

    https://genevasolutions.news/explorations/dispatches-from-women-in-afghanis

    tan/afghanistan-the-only-country-that-bans-girls-education

UNICEF. (n.d.). *Girls' education*. UNICEF. Retrieved June 30, 2025, from

    https://www.unicef.org/education/girls-education

UNDP. (n.d.). *We must dismantle barriers to women's political participation—here's*

    why. UNDP. Retrieved June 30, 2025, from

    https://www.undp.org/blog/we-must-dismantle-barriers-womens-political-parti

    cipation-heres-why

World Bank. (n.d.). *Girls' education*. World Bank. Retrieved June 30, 2025, from

    https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/girlseducation

World Economic Forum. (2025, March). *Financial barriers are limiting women in*

    politics. World Economic Forum. Retrieved June 30, 2025, from

    https://www.weforum.org/stories/2025/03/financial-barriers-are-limiting-wom

    en-in-politics/

World Economic Forum. (2023, October). *How more women in positions of power can*

change politics. World Economic Forum. Retrieved June 30, 2025, from https://www.weforum.org/stories/2023/10/how-more-women-positions-power-politics/