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the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly:**

**Priority Theme: “Fostering social development and social
justice through social policies to accelerate progress on the
implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable
Development and to achieve the overarching goal of
poverty eradication”**

Statement submitted by Graduate Women International (GWI), a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

Unlocking the Potential and Power of Education as the Key to Social Development and Poverty Eradication

Graduate Women International (GWI), founded in 1919, GWI is a leading girls' and women's global organization advocating for the safe access to quality education and lifelong training up to the highest levels for every woman and girl. GWI has maintained special consultative status with ECOSOC since 1947. Our organization is pleased to submit its written statement addressing the primary theme, Fostering social development and social justice through social policies to accelerate progress on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to achieve the overarching goal of poverty eradication, to the 62nd Session of the Commission for Social Development.

Education is the cornerstone on which a more equitable and prosperous future can be built for women and girls. Education is not only a catalyst for gender equality but also a powerful weapon against poverty. Supported by extensive research and practical evidence, it is well-established that education breaks the intergenerational cycle of poverty and reduces persistent gender disparities. Education empowers women and girls with skills for stable, better-paying jobs, increases their financial independence, and reduces the binds of poverty.

Therefore, GWI urges States to recall their commitment to the Third Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018–2027) adopted by the UN General Assembly resolution [72/233](#) in 2017 under the theme, “Accelerating global actions for a world without poverty.” The resolution emphasizes the importance of enacting a multidimensional approach to poverty eradication that includes significant investment in education; it underscores the need to integrate poverty eradication efforts with broader, modern objectives, and is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 1, to “end poverty in all its forms everywhere.”

Women are all too often the face of poverty. Without the eradication of poverty, gender equality cannot be achieved. Conversely, without gender equality, the eradication of poverty cannot be achieved. Globally, 1.1 billion people live in multidimensional poverty with context further defining it (Global Multidimensional Poverty Index, 2023). That is, the needs of the rural poor may differ from those in refugee camps or urban settings. Further, conditions such as war, natural disasters, climate change, and systemic gender and racial bias can displace and/or push women into poverty or keep them from climbing out. There is no one simple solution.

Education is vital but not sufficient to address this issue. However, it is, as World Vision states, the number one of eight effective solutions to poverty reduction. Yet in 2021 more than 100 million girls were not in school and many that were displayed “learning poverty” or, a lack of functional literacy and numeracy. Global poverty could be halved if all students in low-income countries had basic reading skills and all adults completed secondary school.

Any one intervention in education, health, nutrition, reproductive healthcare, and water and sanitation can positively impact the others for the individual. For example, the improved health status of a child will improve her ability to learn. Likewise, smaller family size means parents may be able to afford to send their girl child to school along with their son(s). But education inputs (SDG4) have a greater impact on all types of human development outcomes. Thus, better education is associated with lower birth rates, lower mother-child mortality rates, better health and nutrition, and lower poverty rates.

On a macro level, economic growth must be integrated with social policies. Economic growth will be faster and more sustainable if corresponding action is taken to reduce poverty through social policies and the education status of the population is improved. Results of research by Ranis, Stewart, & Ramirez (2000) and Suri et al. (2011) from 36–79 developing countries show that a focus on improving human development (increased education and poverty reduction) must precede or accompany economic growth for a country to sustain such growth over an extended period. In other words, it is a mistake for a country to limit social expenditures in order to increase GDP growth.

GWII supports the United Nations in recognizing that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is one of the most significant global challenges and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. As staunch advocates that education reduces poverty, GWII call on member states to take the following concrete actions:

1. Strengthen partnerships with NGOs and other stakeholders such as grassroots, women-led networks, to leverage their expertise and resources in the fight against poverty and gender inequality.
2. Support the Secretary-General's call for each member state to create a national benchmark for reducing poverty. Such benchmarks would consist of a numerical target for reducing poverty by 2027 against national poverty lines (SDG 1.2) and be disaggregated by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, and geographic location.
3. Mandate and monitor a quality, disaggregated data-collection strategy to inform evidence-based policymaking.
4. Ensure publicly funded quality primary and secondary education for all.
5. Invest in vocational education and training for youth, particularly in countries with considerable growth in youth populations.
6. Increased economic growth can only be sustained with social policymaking initiatives that commit to dismantling systemic barriers to quality education for all and gender equality.
7. Continue necessary aid to low-income countries with the lowest domestic resources that have limited ability to raise tax revenue.
8. Governments must work with partners across all sectors, such as nongovernmental organizations, businesses, private sector institutions, donors, aid agencies, public departments, and ministries to be most effective in accelerating poverty reduction strategies.
9. Ensure a human rights approach to poverty reduction. A human rights approach as the basis of all efforts in poverty reduction strategies would go far in dismantling systemic gender inequality and racism.