



Graduate Women
International (GWI)

Press Release

GWI calls for increased focus on educational infrastructure to improve quality of girls' education

Geneva, Switzerland, 17 November 2017 – In 1941, the International Students Council in London declared 17 November [International Students' Day](#) in honour of the student resistance of Nazi occupation in Prague in 1939. Although the day originally began as an international observance of student activism, it has evolved to more wholly celebrate students around the world and recognize the importance of global education.

To mark the 2017 International Students' Day, Graduate Women International (GWI) reaffirms our commitment to advance the opportunity for safe access to quality education for female students around the world with special emphasis this year on governments investment in school infrastructure. For students to adequately gain knowledge in an educational setting, it is crucial that the school environment is conducive to learning.

GWI recognizes that a leading barrier to achieving a quality education is a lack of proper educational infrastructure suitable for learning. Overcrowded schools, schools with inadequate sanitary facilities and schools that are far from home, all erode attendance, especially for girls. When classrooms are overcrowded, students cannot thrive, and teachers are forced to spend more time managing the classroom than delivering instruction. Inadequate sanitary facilities dissuade girls from attending school due to menstruation, and instances of sexual harassment and bullying are increased. Increased distances between school and home puts girls at greater risk for assault or gender-based violence on the commute, and dissuades parents from allowing their daughters to attend school.

“Improving educational infrastructure reduces the stressful environments that many girls around the world are forced to learn in, and frees their minds up to focus on academic material instead,” says Geeta Desai, President of GWI. “Quality educational infrastructure motivates both teachers and students, improving the quality of education all around.”

GWI takes this International Students' Day as an opportunity to call for government and community leadership action to improve educational infrastructure and classroom conditions for students around the world. The lack of adequate physical infrastructure and its consequential barriers to education can only be addressed effectively with the exposure and reduction of underlying corruption and gender bias that limit domestic spending on school infrastructure. It is imperative that the private and public sectors collaborate with civil society to ensure that budgeted commitments made by governments are kept so that student teacher ratios are improved, sanitation facilities are adequate and girls' access to safe, quality education is guaranteed.

About GWI

Graduate Women International (GWI) is a membership-based international NGO based in Geneva, Switzerland, with presence in over 60 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 since 1947 and in an NGO maintaining official relations with UNESCO and ILO.

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Learn about our [advocacy work](#). Follow us on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Twitter](#) (@GradWomen). **For more information please contact:** Stacy Dry Lara, Executive Director, Graduate Women International
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